

Hiraeth:

ZONE 04_KITCHEN GARDEN AND PUMP HOUSE SERVICE YARD - DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT (INCLUDING HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT)

Gnoll Estate Country Park | Neath | Neath Port Talbot | SA11 3BS

FOREWORD

Address:

Gnoll Estate Country Park
Neath
Neath Port Talbot
SA11 3BS

Unitary (Local) Authority:

Neath Port Talbot

Grid Reference:

SS763972
E 276282
N 197202



idea.actors.drove

Listing:

The Kitchen Garden and pump house service yard are not listed or in a conservation area.

Location:

The Kitchen Garden and pump house service yard are located in Gnoll Estate Country Park. A grade II* designated parkland.

This document has been produced to support a planning application to Neath Port Talbot Council for the restoration of the kitchen gardens and the introduction of holiday accommodation and associated facilities at Gnoll Country Park. It is to be read in conjunction with the associated information and drawings produced by the consultant team and, in particular, the Gnoll Estate Country Park Context Statement by Hiraeth Architecture which sets out the history of the site and overall project development.

The proposals are born out of a wider desire to reinstate the Gnoll Estate Country Park at the historic heart of its community, providing an iconic, aspirational and sustainable parkland that is a gateway to the wider Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor. The overall scheme is subject to individual applications that coincide with the project programme.

Ownership

The Gnoll Estate Country Park is largely owned by Neath Port Talbot Council and has evolved from the landscaped grounds of the former Gnoll House. Set within 200 acres of woodland and open spaces, the Park is renowned for its picturesque beauty, and although it's historic character has been somewhat diluted through the loss of the original country house and associated ornamental planting, many of its structural elements remain intact and it continue to be a major attraction for both locals and visitors.

To arrange a site visit, please contact the Client representative using the following details:

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Lead Contractors and delivery partners coordinating the RIBA stage 3 works and advising on the viability and build ability of the proposals.

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Neath Port Talbot Ecologist (Consultancy + Planning)

Ecologists advising on all aspects of biodiversity and ecology proposals.

Consultant in charge of the project: Megan Price

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council | The Quays | Brunel Way | Baglan Energy

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Neath Port Talbot Arboriculturalist (Consultancy + Planning)

Arboriculturalist advising on all aspects of the growing, maintaining, managing and removal of woody plants

Consultant in charge of the project: Nick Thomas

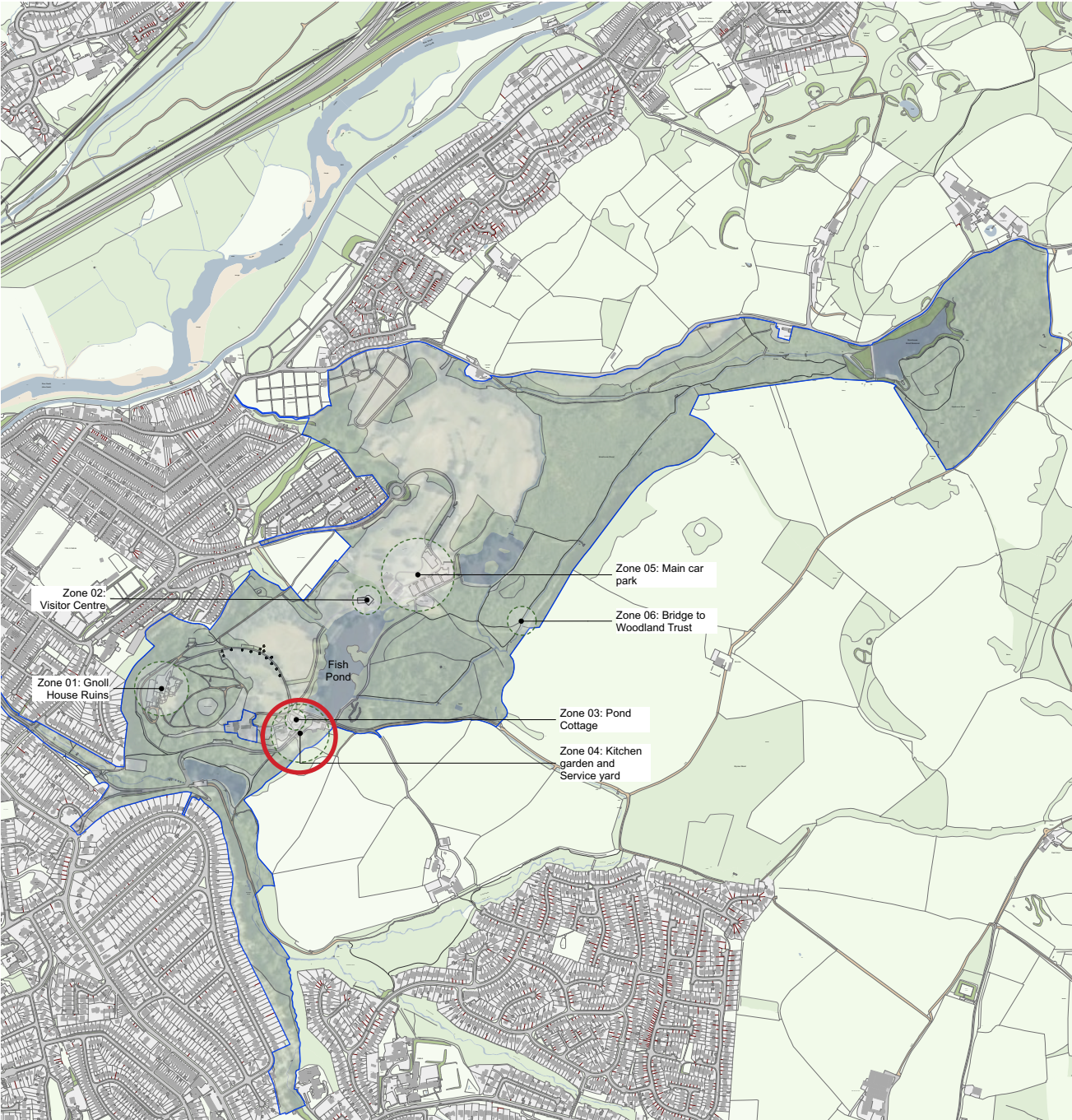
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council | The Quays | Brunel Way | Baglan Energy.

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UPRN	Zone	Originator	Role	Type	File number	Suitability	Rev
2080	04	HIR	A	RP	06803	S2	P1
Suitability		S2 - Issued For Information					



00004.1 SITE PLAN ZONES
SCALE 1:5000 @ A1, 1:10,000 @ A3

Groll Park is a Grade II* registered parkland. As a consequence of this designation it is statutorily protected. Extreme care should therefore be taken not to cause any unspecified damage to any fabric or part of structures and landscape on or within the site when undertaking any construction works.

General Notes
Responsibility is not accepted for errors made by others scaling from this drawing.
All construction information should be taken from figured dimensions only. Dimensions are in millimetres unless otherwise stated.
All dimensions and conditions are to be checked on site prior to preparing drawings or commencing any work.
Any variations or supplementary drawings are to be approved by The Architect.
All details are to be read in strict accordance with GA drawings and construction notes
All steelwork sizes, padstones, blockwork strengths and associated structural design to be in accordance with structural engineers design and requirements. Hiraeth Architecture accepts no liability to any discrepancies in the structural design indicated on these drawings. Any structural related queries should be directed to the project engineer immediately.

SERIES		EXISTING
SUITABILITY		S2 - ISSUED FOR INFORMATION
REV	DATE	NOTE

Hiraeth.

232500

Neath Port Talbot CBC

GNOLL PARK

Site Plan Zones



Scale1:5000 @ A1, 1:10000 @ A3Date08/23

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UPRN	Zone	Originator	Role	Type	Sheet number	S Code	Rev
2080	00	HIR	A	DR	00004	S2	

do not scale from this drawing | all dimensions to be verified on site | not liable for all discrepancies | copyright Hiraeth Architecture

INTRODUCTION

This application relates to Zone 4: The Kitchen Gardens and Associated Former Pump House Service Yard.

Overview

This document has been prepared by **Hiraeth** Architecture on behalf of Andrew Scott Ltd. in support of an application for full planning permission from Neath Port Talbot Council for the repair, reconfiguration, addition of holiday accommodation and associated works to the Kitchen Gardens and the former Pump House Service Yard. More specifically, the proposed works include:

- The opening up and re-landscaping of the former kitchen gardens, which are currently used as a park store/ service space, and have become overgrown and derelict;
- The repair and consolidation of historic garden walls and the construction of a number of new walls/ timber screens to help better define spaces for the proposed uses;
- The partial demolition and reconstruction of the former potting sheds/ service buildings within the kitchen garden to form 2 no. high quality self-catering units and an office/ reception building for the proposed holiday accommodation;
- The installation of 14 bespoke-designed pre-fabricated accommodation cabins, set within the historic kitchen gardens to help reinterpret the layout of this area in addition to providing a revenue source for the park;
- The construction of a support building to house a linen store, gardener/ volunteer welfare room and a shared laundry space for visitors, alongside covered outdoor bike storage and an enclosed bin compound;
- The demolition of an existing garage building and its replacement with a new building to house a workshop space and garden tool/machinery store set within a dedicated yard, to facilitate the upkeep of the kitchen gardens;
- Amendments to the former Pump House Service Yard to accommodate parking for the accommodation.



Aerial View of The Groll Estate Country Park showing the immediate context of Neath to the South West and the location of the Kitchen Garden and service yard circled in red

SITE CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS



Elevated view of Pond Cottage (left of shot), with the tree line of the former Service Yard and Kitchen garden rising to the right of it

Overview Description & Access Points

As shown on the plan on Page 1 of this report, site for Zone 04 encompasses the historic kitchen gardens and former Pump House Service Yard.

Research undertaken as part of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) by CFP has established the general history and development of the park including the Kitchen Gardens and nearby Pond Cottage. In addition, the wider site context is summarised in the Project Context Document produced by Hiraeth Architecture and detail of Pond Cottage is included in the planning application associated with this zone.

The kitchen gardens are located to the east of the pleasure grounds, to land that sits South West of Pond Cottage, which was formerly the Park Ranger's house. There are a number of structures in this area including a free-standing stone wall that defines the northern boundary, and a sizeable retaining wall to the west. The focus of the area is three buildings that until recently were used to service the wider park. These form a U-shaped group around a central courtyard space. Adjacent to the northern boundary wall, the ground rises to the west via a track to a higher plateau to the west of the collection of buildings

The kitchen gardens currently comprises a mix of poorly maintained asphalt, derelict buildings, temporary container units and areas of scrub/ vegetation. Refer to ecology report for further detail on the value of the vegetation on site.

The Kitchen Gardens and Service Yard are directly accessed by vehicles from the south, via a steeply inclined, tarmac road, which leads up from Cimla Road and the residential area below. This road is an unadopted highway, referred to as 'Gnoll Access Road West'. The site is also well-linked to the main network of footpaths within the park from the north.

The kitchen gardens were historically associated with Gnoll House, and are described by Cadw as part of the designated park description as follows:

'The former kitchen gardens lie to the east of the pleasure grounds, on ground sloping gently to the south, and have origins in the mid-eighteenth century. To their west is Gnoll Cottage, or Little Gnoll House, and garden. The kitchen gardens forms three compartments. The northernmost is roughly oval in shape, partially walled and under rough grass. The others occupy a roughly rectangular area adjoining on the south, bounded by walls 2.5m-4.5m high with a wide entrance at the east end. The east compartment is on two levels; on the upper one is a modern glasshouse; on the lower one are two long, parallel ranges of single-storey stone and brick bothies. To their south are three modern glasshouses set at right-angles to the bothies. The third compartment, to the west, is roughly square, the south-east corner rounded and with an entrance towards the west end of the south side. Tipping has raised the ground level in this compartment.'

It should be noted that not all structures recorded in the above description are still extant on the site (these are highlighted in red in the quote above). Of particular note is the subsequent loss of the greenhouses.

Land directly to the east of the kitchen gardens forms the curtilage of Gnoll Cottage, which is outside the ownership of NPT. In addition to the above, a further associated area to Pond Cottage and the kitchen gardens is the existing operational service yard for the park that lies directly to the south of the fish pond and to the southwest of Pond Cottage, in a natural depression in the land. This gravelled area houses the pump house and modern, single storey, pitched roof, metal storage sheds that facilitate the operations within the park. As a result of the significantly lower ground level, this area is naturally well-screened by existing topography and trees. This is accessed via a steeply inclined road, Gnoll Access Road West, which wraps up and around Pond Cottage from the residential area below from Cimla Road.

The kitchen gardens form 4 distinct areas, defined by various high walls and hedges, and further separated due to the varied topography of the site. These areas are used to more easily describe the contextual analysis and design steps taken as part of this project.



Diagrammatic representation of the Kitchen Gardens showing 4 key areas. To act as a key to site context and analysis, as described on the following pages.



Area 1: ill maintained asphalt, with overgrown rear portion to the foreground, right of the photo.

Description, Topography and Boundaries: Area 1

Area 1 sits to the north of one of the key historic garden walls, which is overgrown with ivy. This wall forms the southern boundary of this area. The northern edge is bounded by a 4m tall, unmanaged box hawthorn hedge, punctuated by a number of other species and trees and terminated to the east with a clump of bamboo. The hedge is currently overgrown and has been designated in the Arboricultural report as a Category B hedge.

Area 1 is currently fenced by a post and wire fence to the eastern edge, punctuated by a metal gate to prohibit public access. Behind this gate, the area is split into two discernible areas: the first comprising an area of ill-maintained asphalt, which is becoming more overgrown with scrub vegetation; the second, to the west of this area, is heavily overgrown with low-level grasses, flora and a number of saplings, which have been group categorised by the arboriculturalist as Category 'C' - 'a naturalised area with natural regeneration of trees, scrub and undergrowth'. There are two slightly larger trees which bisect area 1 but these have not been flagged to have any specific significance. Further clearance in line with ecologists recommendations will be required to fully understand the topography of this area, but it is assumed to largely follow the slope of the land to the south of the wall in areas 2 and 4.

Description, Topography and Boundaries: Area 2

Areas 2-3 are currently used by the park maintenance service. Area 2 is bounded to the north by the historic garden wall that forms the southern boundary of area 1. A galvanised steel palisade gate set between modern brick gateposts gives restricted access to areas 2 and 3. To the east sits the rubble stone garden wall of Pond Cottage. This wall is overgrown with vegetation and is partially obscured from view by a number of storage containers. The southern and western boundary is formed by tall historic garden walls, which support a run of lean-to potting sheds. The area houses a range of historic potting sheds and greenhouses in a poor state of repair consisting of three buildings which form a U-shaped group, around a central courtyard space (refer also Existing Structures and Historic Overview).



View from Area 3, looking towards the garden wall of Pond Cottage, showing opening into existing WC, containers and existing pebbledash garage.



Existing steps between Area 3 & 4, leading to path through trees.

A modern concrete-rendered flat-roofed building has been constructed within this courtyard space. The ground to the north of this range of buildings rises to form an access route into Area 4, creating a situation in which the rear wall of the northern-most potting shed becomes increasingly retaining. The topography is largely level across the rest of the area, differing some 350mm between east and west, which is barely perceptible to the eye.

Description, Topography and Boundaries: Area 3

The large garden wall to the south of the potting sheds forms the northern boundary wall to the southern compartment (area 3), currently used to store various items associated with park maintenance. As this area flows from Area 2, the eastern boundary is also formed by the garden wall of Pond Cottage. There is an existing break in this wall, which gives access to an old outdoor WC set within the curtilage of Pond Cottage. A pebble-dash rendered garage with a pitched roof sits to the south east of this area. Whilst the topography in this area varies only some 300mm across its length from east to west, the southern boundary falls away to the retaining wall along the edge of Gnoll Access Road West. This is sporadically populated by trees, through which views down over Neath are possible. The western boundary is formed by a low retaining wall, behind which the tree-covered land slopes steeply up within area 4. There is a break in this wall, through which natural stone steps rise up to give access to area 4.

Description, Topography and Boundaries: Area 4

The natural stone steps described above rise 1m through the wall, becoming a dirt path which climbs through the trees to the highest, flat area in compartment 4, which sits approx. 3m above area 3. Area 4 is bounded to the south by land which falls steeply away to the retaining wall along Gnoll Access Road West. This is covered in trees, which have been group categorised as a collection of Ash, Aspen, Birch, Lime and P. Oak - Category C (refer to Arboriculturalist report). The eastern boundary has a low wall which provides separation between NPT owned land and the adjacent cottage which is in private ownership. Again there are a number of trees along this boundary which have been group categorised as a collection of Ash, Beech, Hornbeam and Maple as Category C, with specific advice to 'remove 5 dead trees and diseased Ash. Prune remaining trees to improve form.' (refer to Arboriculturalist report).



Pump House service yard, looking down from the access road to the east of Pond Cottage



Access point into the former pump house service yard, at a widening in Gnoll Access Road West.

The north of Area 4 is separated from Area 1 by the tall historic garden wall. There is an existing access point through this wall which is currently obscured by a bank of saplings which have not been categorised as significant. The area itself comprises an area of made up ground, which is becoming increasingly overgrown.

Description, Topography and Boundaries: Former Pump House Service Yard

The former Pump House Service Yard sits approx. 5m below the path which crosses the dam to the south of Fish Pond. The area is lined to the east, south and west with trees, which have been individually recorded as B, C and U category trees by the . To the west, the land slopes up steeply to Gnoll Access Road West.

A number of buildings are currently housed within the Service Yard, comprising two store buildings, two metal containers and the Pump House (a lean-to building located on the wall of the reservoir dam, used to house pumping equipment. An area of hardstanding forms a work area between these various buildings.

Access into this area is directly from Gnoll Access Road West, through locked, metal field gates sited in the western corner of this area.



Existing outbuildings, forming a U-shaped group in Area 2



Interior of the eastern-most room of the north-facing potting shed

Existing Structures

Various metal shipping containers, the concrete-rendered building in the courtyard and the pebble-dash rendered garage (all housed within areas 2 and 3) are modern and in a poor state of repair. It is fair to say they have little social, historical, or architectural value and would benefit from removal as part of the works.

The collection of potting sheds/ greenhouses in area 2 have been built in 3 phases (refer Historical Overview). The southern most lean-to building is the most historic. This comprises 5 rooms laid out in a linear design. 3 are accessible from the north facing façade and are not linked internally, whilst the eastern-most room is accessed from the south and has an internal connection to the adjacent room.

The fenestration of this building demonstrates that various amendments have been made over the years. Amendments are visible on the northern façade through the mix of masonry materials: largely rubble stone, with red brick infill. Openings have been boarded and bricked up on the inside, leaving the windows visible to the external façade. The roof is of slate with a number of rooflights positioned across its length. Some areas of the roof have been replaced with metal corrugate, furthering the impression of a building that has been modified and ‘patched-up’ over time.

The building to the western end is more modern - constructed from a masonry base with a timber-framed structure above, clad in metal corrugate. The western wall of this is formed in part by the retaining boundary wall between areas 2 and 4. The roof is also metal corrugate.

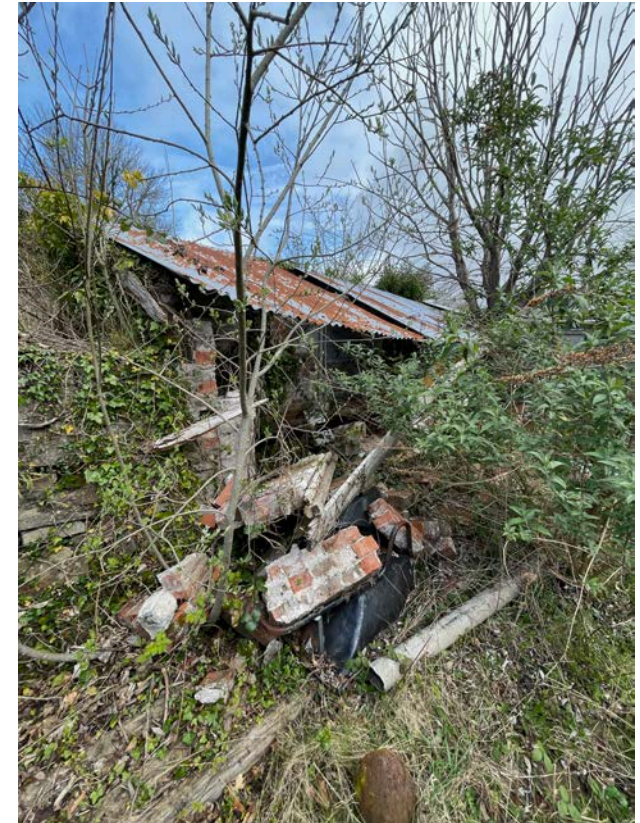
The northern-most building is a single room. Its south-facing aspect, and research outlined in the Historical Overview section of this report, suggest that this building was once a glasshouse. The eaves of the mono-pitch roof are set at approx. 2.2m at the highest end and 1.7m at the lowest end, further suggesting that the building incorporated an element of glazing that has since been lost. The walls and later-added corrugate roof to this building are now collapsing.



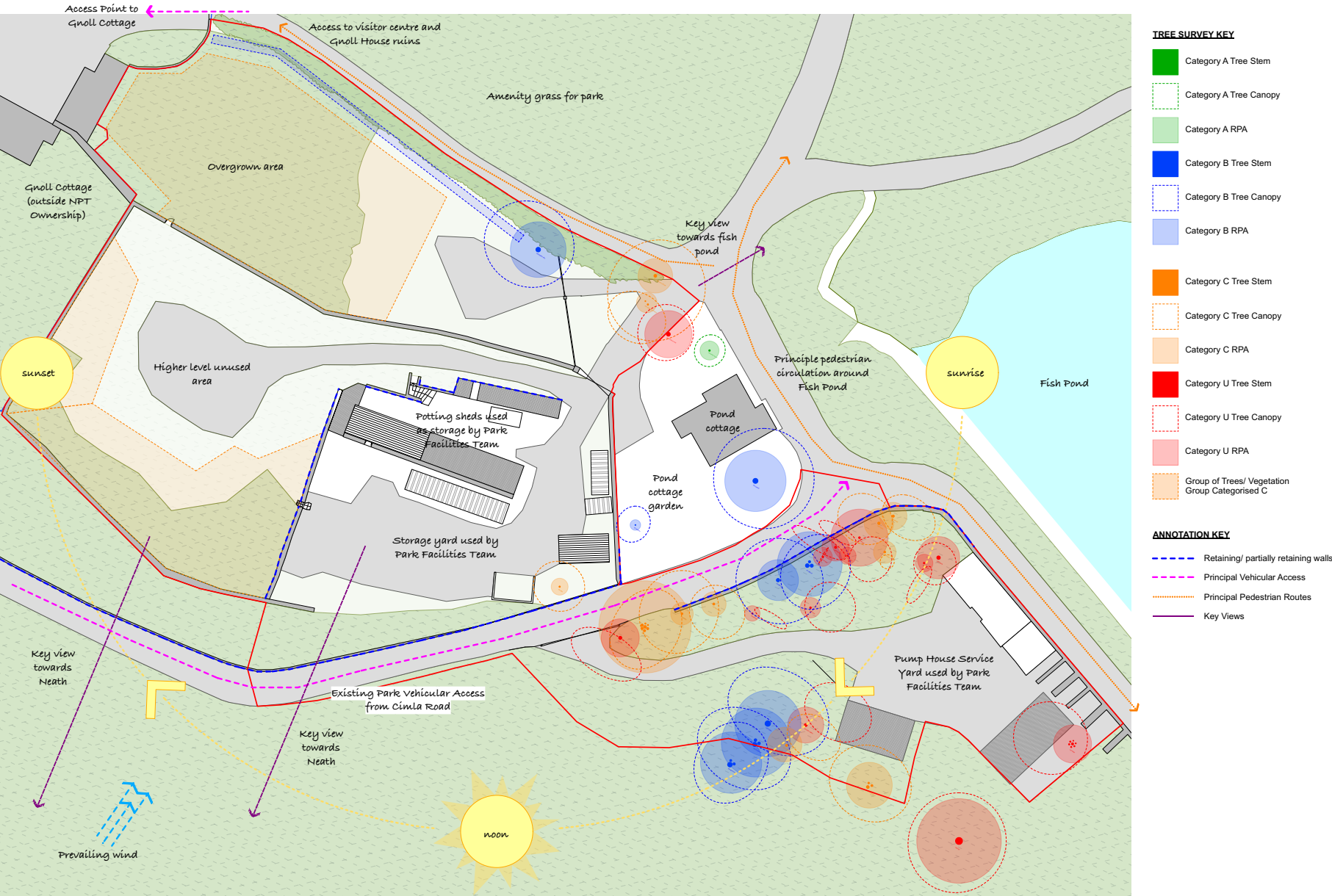
Interior view of the north-facing lean-to potting sheds, showing replacement corrugate roof



Interior view of the west-facing building showing retaining wall to right and timber frame clad in corrugate sitting atop low masonry wall.



View of the south-facing building showing general collapse and poor condition. The roof is a later addition.



Existing site analysis drawing summarising key contextual aspects of the site. Do not scale.



Glimpsed views into the site from adjacent to Fish Pond

Views in

Views into the Kitchen gardens from the north and east are generally restricted due to high walls and hedges, although views into area 1 are currently possible from the path which runs around Fish Pond. Views from the west are restricted to those who have access to the property that sits outside NPT ownership. Views into the site from the south are possible from Gnoll Access Road West, which slopes up at a lower level to that occupied by the Kitchen Garden.

Views out

Views out of the site are generally concentrated to the south, through the tree-lined boundary and over Neath. Short range views to the east take in Pond Cottage



Looking South from area 4 - in winter and with tree management to thin the trees, views over Neath would be possible



Looking South from the ramped path up to area 4 - long range views seen over the potting sheds



Looking East from the ramped path up to area 4 - short range views of Pond Cottage



*Existing derelict potting sheds - largely stone with brick infill.
Overgrown with brambles*

Character Appraisal

The existing character of the kitchen gardens can be summarised as one of enclosure, functionality and dereliction. However, hints to its past still remain, particularly the high stone walls and collection of potting sheds. These wall and the existing topography add to the character of the area, creating distinct zones of enclosure which have historically been used for different purposes associated with the kitchen gardens of Gnoll House.

Despite the remaining historic elements which help define the character of the Kitchen Gardens, the current run-down condition of the Kitchen Garden does detracts from the original character, which would have been focused on organised productivity and innovation.

The character of the former pump house service yard is also one of functionality. Hidden by the topography, this area has always been one of service and function - originally associated with the reservoir and later to include the maintenance facilities yard of the park.

Site Photographs



Key plan showing location of photographs







Overgrown box Hawthorn hedge to the north of area 1, viewed from the park-side.



Collapsed glasshouse with later alterations and roof covering -south facing element in area 2

Architectural Overview

The remaining historic structures on site provide a collection of sheds that would have aided in the running of the Kitchen Garden for the house. They are typical examples of buildings of their period which performed as potting sheds/ back sheds and glasshouses. However, they vary in age (refer Historical Overview), are generally in a poor state of repair, hold little architectural value and are not currently accessible to the public.

Whilst the majority of structures have been lost, the overall structure of the gardens themselves is still present and is clearly defined by the tall stone walls, and access routes around the gardens. As such, the association of this area with the now demolished house is visible and opportunities to enhance this exist.

Archaeological Overview

No below ground archaeological investigations have been commissioned for the purpose of the project and evidence from previous archaeological investigations has not been provided. An archeological watching brief has been produced by Dyfed Architecture and will be submitted as part of this planning application.

HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE KITCHEN GARDEN



Map by B. Jones (1740-1764) shows the fishpond with pump house below. Pond Cottage is not yet built -instead a fish trap occupies the site located just South-West of the Great Pond. There is little detail to the area now occupied by the kitchen garden but it is clearly demarcated as a separate area.

Historic Development

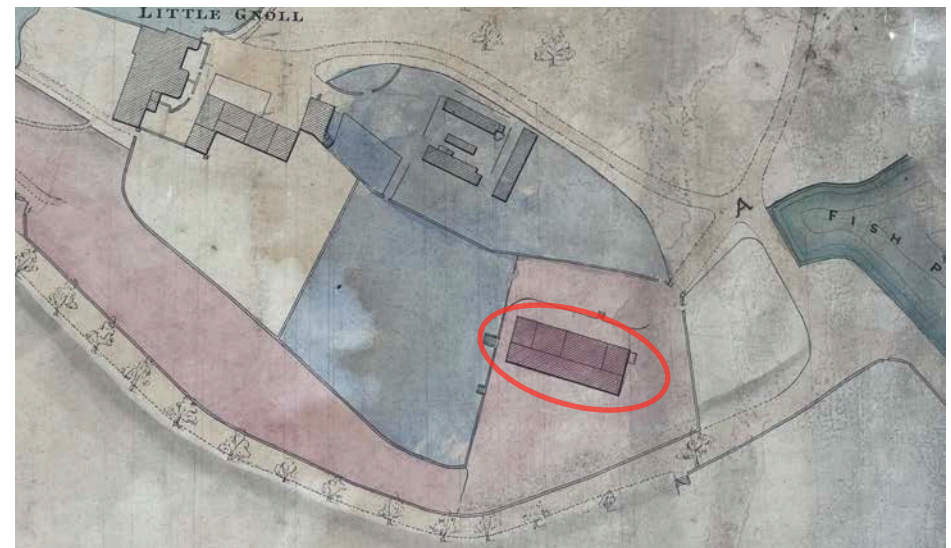
It is understood from the chronological development listed in the CMP that the reservoirs were added to the estate in 1702 to serve the copper mines run by the Mackworth family. The 1740 map on the previous page shows Fish Pond (labelled Pond 7) with a small structure to its South thought to be a pump house serving the reservoir. The area occupied by the Kitchen garden, whilst lacking in detail, appears to be demarcated as a separate area. A later tithe map (1845, right) shows the house and bastion, with Gnoll Cottage within its curtilage. Amendments appear to have been made to Gnoll Cottage between these 2 maps, including the addition of a northern wing and an extension to the outbuildings. Although the kitchen garden has no detail, it should be noted that Tithe Maps were used to show the apportionment of land rather than use.

The 1845 map also highlights that although there appears to have always been structures within the present day pump house service yard, the scale and layout has changed significantly. It is thought that the building currently on this part of the site likely dates to the early 20th century.

The oldest available, detailed map of the kitchen garden area dates from 1862, before the construction of Pond Cottage. The map (bottom right) shows the gardens already split into 3 broad areas. A collection of buildings sit in a similar position to the southern-most potting shed (circled red). Notably this structure had a much bigger footprint than found currently and, given the later map regression, it is likely that only the northern portion of this survives today. An additional group of buildings are located within the northern-most zone, which demonstrates that within the history of the gardens built structures have played a large part in its development and management.



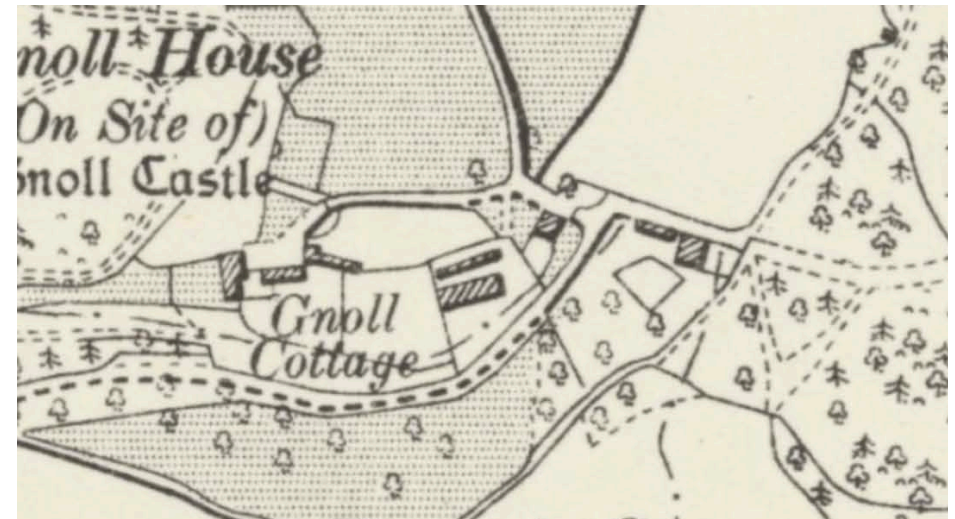
Extract from Tithe Map dated 1845



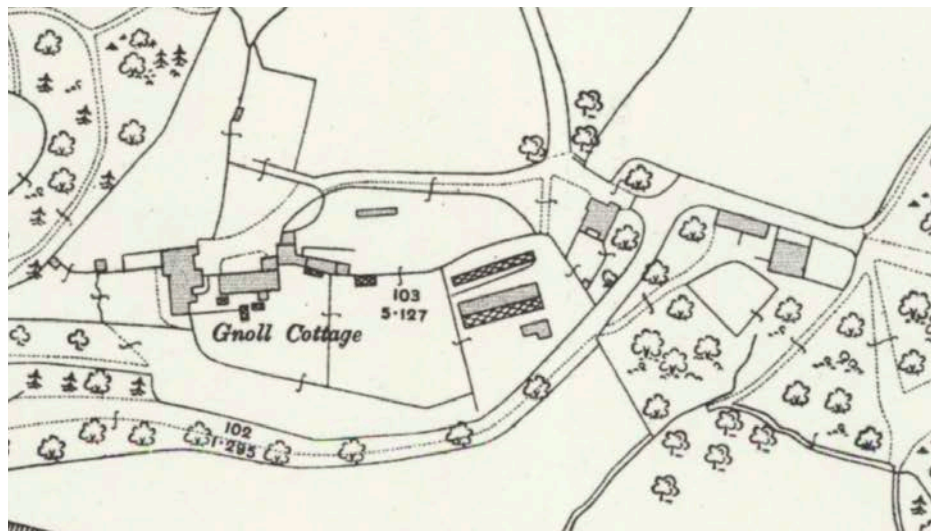
Extract from map dated 15th July 1862



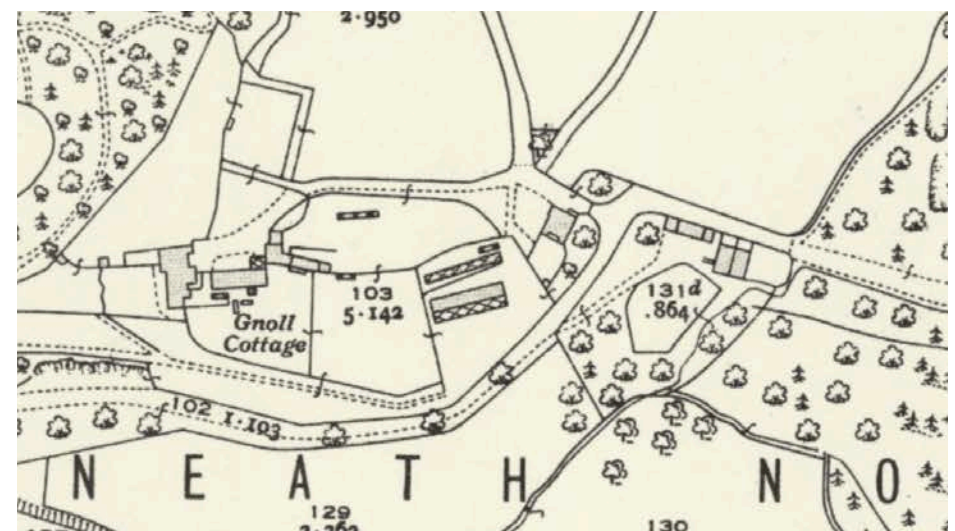
Glamorgan Sheet XVI, surveyed 1876-77, published 1884.



Glamorgan Sheet XVI.SW, revised 1897, published 1900.



Glamorgan Sheet XVI.9, revised 1913-14, published 1919.



Glamorgan Sheet XVI.9, revised 1935-36, published 1937.

The above maps show the general arrangement of the kitchen gardens and pump house service yard through a map progression over a period of around 60 years.

The map regression confirms that the Kitchen Gardens have contained various structures, often arranged along walls and that there has been amendment and development over time. A linear building is also shown to the north of area 1 in three of the plans. In addition, evidence of the curved wall and eastern building, which are shown alongside Gnoll Cottage as early as the 1862 map, are still extant on the OS plan today, although they sit outside the ownership of NPT.

Historical Overview

The kitchen garden was introduced to the estate to provide food for the manor house. Beds of diverse herbs, medicinal plants and dye plants, edible flowers as well as salads, vegetables and fruit would have been grown alongside orchards, dovecotes and beehives, which would have been prepared together with fish from the ponds. The aim was true self-sufficiency, and the success of the estate would have, to some degree, depended on this. Through research into both the Gnoll Estate Country Park and kitchen gardens more generally, it is possible to gain an understanding of the context, in order to rightly influence the design.

The gardens would have been established on the innovations and ingenuity of the day to diversify the produce it grew. This would have been assisted in part by wall structures which would moderate the external temperature and protect the produce to some degree, thereby prolonging the growing season and mitigating the risk of crop failure. In addition to this, glasshouses would have been constructed on the south and west side of the wall structures again moderating the climate to enable the growth of fruits and vegetables from more southerly climates. To the north side of the wall, service accommodation would have facilitated the operation, including potting sheds, boiler rooms, and tool sheds. These would typically have been masonry structures.

The produce itself would largely have been laid out within a formal arrangement, ideally south-west facing, with box-edged beds neatly divided into quarters for rotation cropping by hard wearing gravel paths. The south-facing wall was the tallest structure, to make the most of captured heat and for shelter. North-facing walls were used for more acidic fruits such as gooseberries, morello cherries and later fruiting varieties; eastern walls were occupied by sweet cherries, plums and apples; and west-facing walls for early pears. Shallow-rooting perennial crops often sat in the borders below the fruit trees, including herbs, strawberries, rhubarb, artichokes and asparagus, as well as salad crops and cutting flowers.

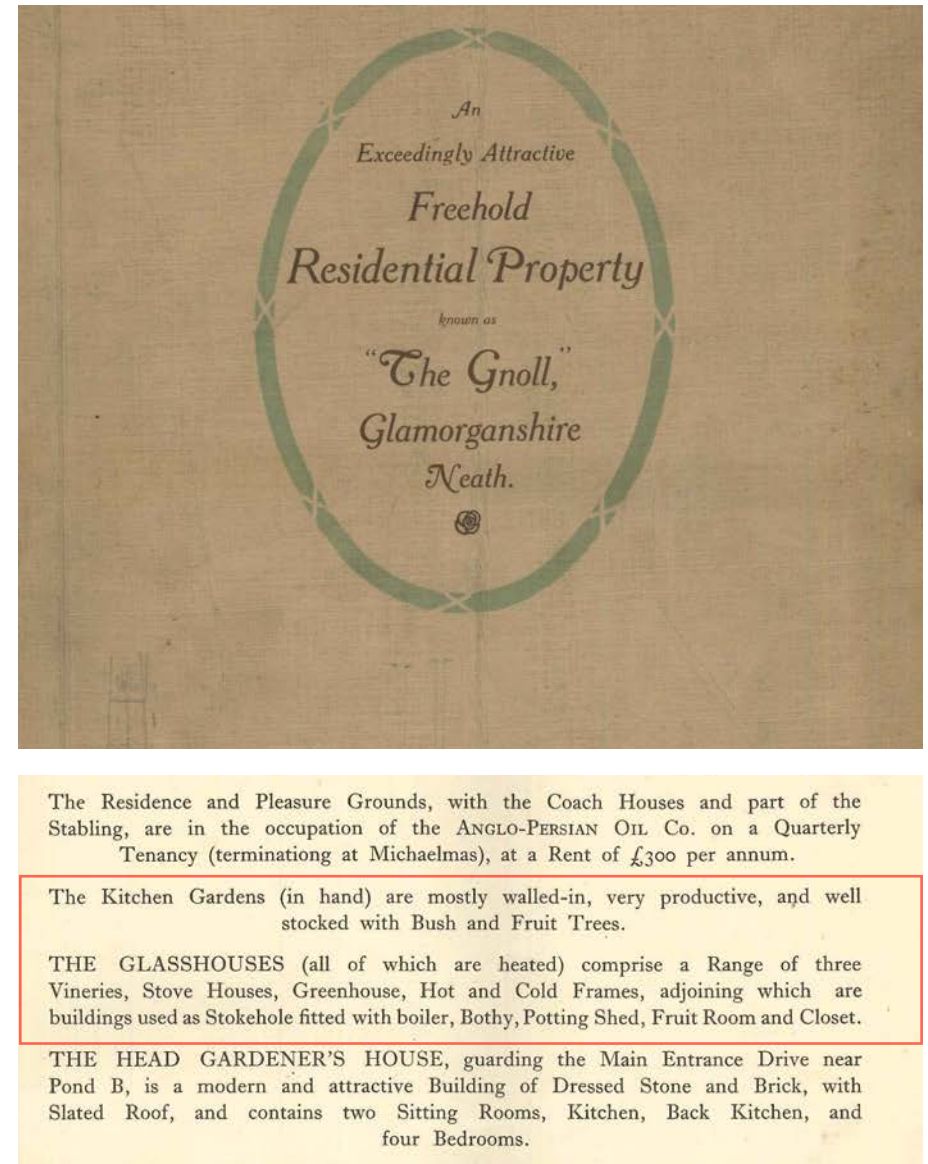
The Kitchen Garden is thought to have been part of the second phase of development by Mackworth which took place during the 1740s. At this time, orangeries and other garden structures had little, if any, glazing to their roofs. Instead, permanent buildings such as orangeries were constructed with large, south-facing windows to provide light to plants that were typically grown in moveable tubs so that they could be placed in the garden during the summer months.

The repeal of the glass tax in 1845, followed by the window tax in 1851, dramatically reduced the cost of glasshouses. An increased curiosity and taste for exotic fruits combined with the manufacturing innovations of the industrial revolution led to the rapid emergence of glasshouses in the country house garden. The pitched glazed roofs were developed to maximise exposure to light, creating the high temperatures and humidity needed to grow pineapples and other tropical fruits. Heating was introduced through hot air flues, steam or piped hot water. Although, the kitchen gardens in the estate originated in the mid 18th Century, it is evident that they were later adapted with the 19th century technologies

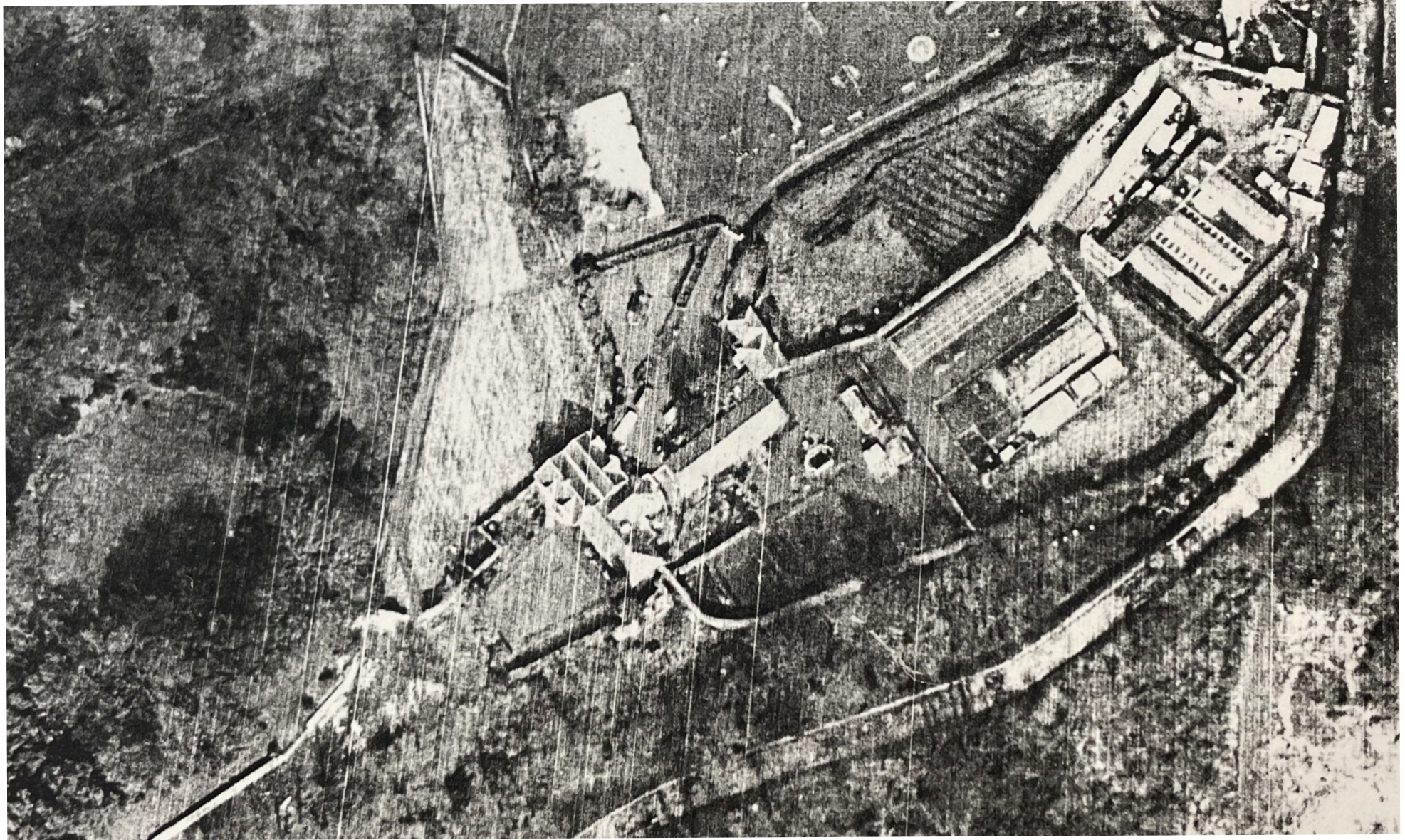
whilst under the ownership of the Grant Family. On the historic maps, glazed portions are shown with a cross hatch.

A sale catalogue of the estate from 1921 describes the kitchen gardens as 'mostly walled-in, very productive, and well stocked with Bush and Fruit Trees'. Furthermore the same document describes 'The Glass Houses (all of which are heated) complete a Range of three Vineries, Stove Houses, Greenhouse, Hot and Cold Frames, adjoining which are buildings used as Stokehole fitted with boiler, Bothy, Potting Shed, Fruit Room and Closet'. This indicates the wide array of structures that would have been located within the kitchen garden, and illustrates the use of contemporary technology - detail that cannot be deciphered from the map regression.

There is very little development visible on ordinance survey maps between the late 19th and early 20th century and, as previously mentioned, the composition is notably different to the description in Cadw's listing (this is likely as whilst the Park was Statutorily designated in 2022, the description was perhaps previously associated with an earlier, non-statutory designation). However, an aerial photograph included in the 1991 *Survey and Report for the restoration of the lakes and watercourses through the Gnoll Estate* shows the southern half of the Kitchen Garden to be much more densely populated with structures (see next page). The 1991 report does not reference the source or date of the photograph, but there are a number elements shown which correspond to the description of the gardens in the 1921 Sale Catalogue, and a number which were perhaps developed at a different point in time.



Front cover and relevant extract from the sale particulars - 1921



Aerial photograph of the Kitchen Gardens taken from the 1991 Survey and Report for the restoration of the lakes and watercourses through the Gnoll Estate. See; structures and planting layout no longer extant on site.

The photograph shows three glass houses which sit perpendicular to the main, still extant, structures in the South East section (area 2/3). To the South-West there is a large glass house positioned along the long South-Facing wall, with a smaller glass house and several other shed-like structures/ planting beds positioned to the South (in area 4). The northern section of the walled garden (area 1) appears to be more open with a large area of diagonally spaced planting (see photo).

The structures that formed the kitchen garden, apart from the walls, have now largely been lost, whilst any formal layout of the planted areas are indecipherable.

In order to further understand the likely construction, scale and massing of these ancillary structures, in the absence of drawings relating to Gboll Park Country Estate, a study has been undertaken of other gardens of a similar period. The photographs to the right and on the next page summarise building precedents from other gardens of a similar period. Key cues that can be used as design generators for the accommodation pods and other structures are noted under each.

Right, clockwise from top:

Holkam: Various structures, including slate-roofed back sheds to the left of the photo, glass houses, sunken pit houses heated with manure for winter forcing and cold frames

Holkam: Mono-pitch potting sheds to the north, with glass houses to the south. Low eaves suitable for planting only

Florence Court: Three quarter span-glass houses to the south with low brick plinths against which cold frames sit





Shottesbrooke Park: Mono-pitch masonry potting sheds - largely closed façades.



RHS Bridgewater: Mono-pitch masonry potting sheds.

Summary of Condition

Prior to any refurbishment works being undertaken or alterations proposed to the kitchen gardens and service yard, it is also essential that there is an understanding of their existing condition and that proposals for intervention to arrest further deterioration of retained fabric are developed. There is currently no information detailing any maintenance procedures for the buildings and grounds in this area. All evidence points to ad-hoc repairs being carried out in a reactive approach. Despite changes that have been made to the remaining structures - largely using incongruous materials - the essence of the potting sheds are still retained.

In relation to the kitchen garden, much of the historic fabric has been lost, together with associated structures and the formality of any garden layouts.

The importance of the site as the bread-basket for the estate, its families and its workers should not be underestimated. Together with the nearby Pond Cottage, it consequently retains a significance to the development and operation of the estate that should be respected and enhanced in any future developments. The proposals therefore generally seek to reinstate a kitchen garden and to use accommodation structures to aid the interpretation of the park, through thoughtful design and placement.

For repair strategies to the key historical garden walls, necessary as part of this application please refer to Structural Engineer's information..

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY VALUE

Gnoll house is an example of the 'country estate' built by the nouveau-riche who had acquired great wealth through industrialisation. During the height of its influence, the Gnoll Estate Country Park held significant social and community value as a result of its position in the landscape and its connection to local industry. Although the parkland had been in private ownership up until the early 20th century, this did not diminish the effect it had on the surrounding community.

An important part of the development of the estate is the Kitchen Garden. The gardens would have performed an essential function within the wider estate providing food for Gnoll house and its inhabitants. In this way, it is crucial to understanding how the estate was operated on a day-to-day basis including the various roles of individuals who may have worked there. Although there is limited information available on the extent of the kitchen gardens, its glasshouses and planting, what has been found is indicative the wealth and interests of the owners at the time. The structures within the garden are not only evidence of a developing estate but also the development of technologies which allowed for the growing of exotic fruits and vegetables, evidencing the societal shifts of the time.

In their current condition, the kitchen garden and pump house service yard offer very little in terms of social and community value. However, with careful design they have high potential to help fulfil the aims of the project and to improve Gnoll Park for the local community and wider audience.

Local Facilities

The Gnoll Estate Country Park is well connected to the surrounding area with good transport links, more details of which can be found within the Project Context Document by Hiraeth Architecture.

Physical Issues

Gnoll Estate Country Park is generally accessible to all; the existing visitor centre and café are wheelchair friendly and there are disabled toilet facilities on site. This will be further improved with the current proposals, including the insertion of a Changing Places WC. The grounds around the Fishpond and the adventure playground have recently been renovated providing easy access to prams, wheelchairs and beamer tramper scooters as well as other paths and walkways around the park which are mainly flat and have a gravel surface.

The kitchen gardens are well located in terms of readily available and existing access within the parkland, with the principal pathway around the fishpond being located immediately to the north side of its main entrance point. To the wider site, the principal walks of Gnoll Estate Country Park are generally accessible, but present the typical problems of accessibility that accompany such historic parks and gardens when these main routes are not followed.

Within the kitchen gardens, it is noted that all areas are accessible without steps.



Aerial view of the Kitchen Garden showing state of disrepair. Compare with 1991 photo.

Economic Issues

The UK government's flagship Levelling Up Fund aims to back projects across the UK to help communities Level Up. Levelling Up means creating opportunities for everyone across the UK, with the project to develop the Kitchen Gardens and Former Pump House Service Yard being part of a wider Levelling Up Funded scheme aiming to deliver £12 million of investment over the next two years at Gnoll Estate Country Park. This will

- Improve visitor facilities including the visitor centre, play offer and pathways
- Restore heritage structures such as the Gnoll House Cellars, Pond Cottage and the formal cascades
- Make enhancements to the natural environment of the wider country park including the reinstatement of the Kitchen Garden and associated visitor accommodation.

The Kitchen Garden is currently an unsustainable amenity, falling into disrepair and used for by the park rangers as a store/ work yard. With no direct income streams being generated by this part of the site, its maintenance is currently contingent on income generated elsewhere in the park. This has without doubt contributed to its generally poor condition and lack of maintenance, contributing to the general deterioration of its built fabric and associated landscape. Through this project and in parallel with other developments, the proposal aims to improve the economic and environmental sustainability of the Kitchen Garden, and to establish a secure financial basis for its coherent management through increasing returns from overnight stays in the area.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE KITCHEN GARDEN

The previous sections, together with the Conservation Management Plan, have developed a sound basis for identifying how the kitchen gardens and pump house service yard came to be, and how it has contributed to the evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal value of the Gnoll Estate Country Park and wider Neath area. The Kitchen Garden and Pump House Service Yard illustrate the following qualities that demonstrate their heritage significance which must be protected in any future development:

- ∞ It is a significant element of a surviving example of a 18th century estate and gardens which was developed by Sir Herbert Mackworth;
- ∞ It has a wider group value within the immediate context of the Gnoll Estate Country Park and the historic buildings and structures within its boundaries;
- ∞ It contributes to the wider setting of the Gnoll Estate Country Park – a key parkland in Neath;
- ∞ It provides insight into the day-to-day running of the estate during the height of its significance, acting as a ‘bread-basket’ providing food for the inhabitants of Gnoll House and their guests;
- ∞ For its form and layout as a formal kitchen garden with associated glass houses and potting sheds which have largely been lost.

THE BRIEF

The Kitchen Gardens are an important part of the history of Gnoll Estate Country Park, having an intimate relationship with the running of Gnoll House in its heyday.

Prior to work associated with the LUF bid, a report undertaken by Planning Solutions in 2019 proposed that there would be a commercial market for inserting pods into a designated area of Gnoll Park in order to provide an income stream for the ongoing development and maintenance of this public asset. Initial conceptual layouts located this within the former kitchen gardens and it was suggested that the potting sheds, currently used as maintenance stores, could be refurbished and reconfigured into accommodation units.

The proposed development therefore provides a timely opportunity to implement the outcome of this report as part of the successful Levelling-Up Funded Scheme and, taking an historically-led approach, to make extensive improvements to the former kitchen gardens. The project looks to address the current run-down state of the kitchen gardens, revealing the hidden heritage of this area of the park, whilst increasing tourism in the area and encouraging over-night stays.

To achieve this, the brief looks to provide:

- 14 no. 1 bed, 2 person cabins
- 2 no. Reconstructed and minorly extended potting sheds to provide:
 - 1 no separate 1 bed/ 2 person unit
 - 1 no. 1 bed/ 2 person unit and 1 no. 2 bed/ 4 person unit, that can be hired separately or linked to provide a single unit
 - Reception building - with welfare facilities for staff enabling this to be manned 24hrs if necessary.
- New ancillary buildings to provide ares for a visitor laundry, linen store, tool store and welfare space for gardeners.
- Extensive planting to create a kitchen garden.



The client has requested accommodation that achieves a high standard of accreditation from Visit Wales. As part of the brief, the Self-Catering reconstructed/ refurbished potting sheds and lodges have the opportunity to target 5*, where the cabins gave the opportunity to target a 'gold standard', as they will be categorised by Visit Wales as 'Glamping' and therefore come under a different assessment criteria. This, alongside the historical research have defined and evolved the overall brief for the project.

The proposals also seek to offer a positive enhancement of the Kitchen Gardens and Former Pump House Service Yard. They represent a careful balancing of the complex and competing constraints of this historic parkland site with careful consideration has being necessary in detailing and materiality to complement the existing character and historic story of the context. In addition to this every effort to ensure high standards of energy efficiency and sustainability are achieved is essential to ensure the future viability of the parkland.

Key Welsh Government documents relating to target accommodation standards

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Constraints

- The proposals must respect the significance of the parkland and the historic development of the Kitchen Garden. The park is grade II* listed and consequently consideration and weight should be given to the asset's conservation and setting.
- Any new proposal should be commensurate to the existing parkland, addressing the need for revenue generation through holiday accommodation rental, whilst also respecting its historic setting, seeking to provide an enhancement.
- The proposals should respond to the surrounding setting, taking the location into account, regarding security and access from the park and Groll Access Road West.
- New development should be to a high standard of construction, physically responding where possible to the immediate environment, and considering factors such as siting and orientation and direct solar gain where appropriate.
- The historic layout and use of the area should be respected and enhanced through the design and placement of all structures.

Opportunities

- To develop a scheme that creates bespoke rental holiday accommodation to provide income generation for the park, alongside an increase in overnight stays in the area to boost the local tourism economy more widely.
- To achieve a greater value and use from a currently under-utilised space in the park.
- To provide a series of buildings that help to interpret the historic Kitchen Gardens through their placement and design.
- To build on the historic archival research to create a well landscaped area, which takes cues from the historic layout/ development.
- To create a productive area which could provide produce to the café/ Tea Room.
- To maintain the Service Yard as a functional, back of house area, as it has historically been through the provision of designated parking.
- To provide an unobtrusive high quality scheme that improves the presentation of the Park and immediate garden setting.
- To sensitively manage change within the curtilage of an existing historic Parkland to meet the current and future needs of the community and park, without compromising its historic significance, therefore enabling the park to have a viable and desirable future use and positive community impact.
- To create unique accommodation that achieves a high standard of accreditation from Visit Wales. The Self-Catering reconstructed/ refurbished potting sheds and lodges have the opportunity to target 5*, where the cabins gave the opportunity to target a 'gold standard'.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

This document is supported by a Planning Statement/Detailed Covering Letter by Asbri Planning and should be read in conjunction with this information which gives a detailed policy overview in terms of the proposals.

Overview Policy Context

Planning Policy Wales provides the national planning policy context for Wales, supplemented by Technical Advice Note 24 (TAN). Procedural guidance is provided in the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Chapter 6 of PPW, The Historic Environment sets out the Welsh Government's objectives with regard to the protection and enhancement of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens in Wales as follows:

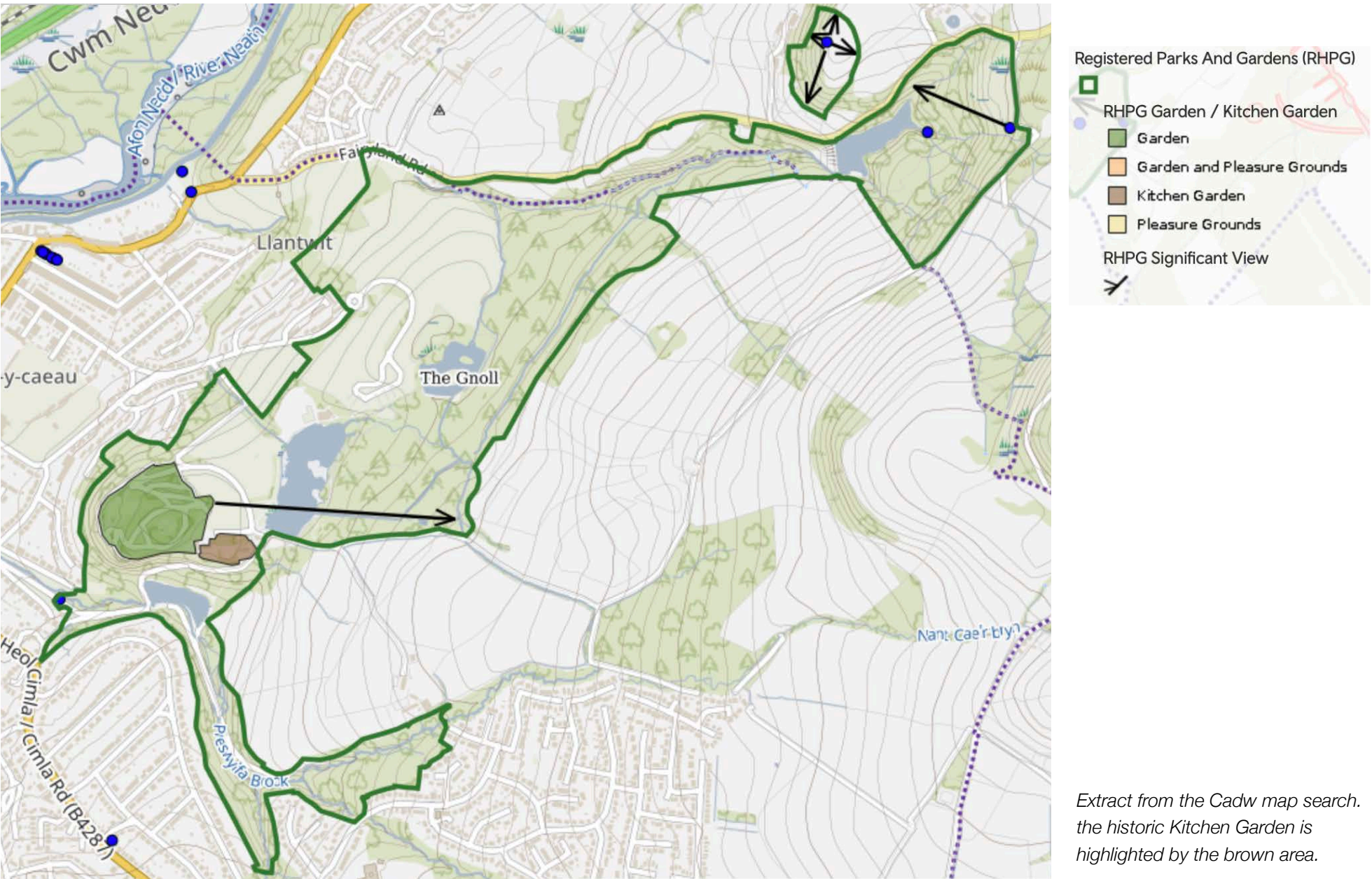
- conserve and enhance the historic environment, which is a finite and non-renewable resource and a vital and integral part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales;
- recognise its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride, local distinctiveness and the quality of Welsh life, and its importance as a resource to be maintained for future generations;
- base decisions on an understanding of the significance of Wales' historic assets;
- contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the past by making an appropriate record when parts of a historic asset are affected by a proposed change, and ensuring that this record or the results of any investigation are securely archived and made publicly available.

Local Development Plan

The Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan 2011-2026 (Adopted January 2016) provides the local policy framework for the development and conservation needs of the area. In this respect the Council has an important role in securing the conservation of the historic environment while ensuring that it accommodates and remains responsive to present day needs. This is a key aspect of the Council's wider sustainable development responsibilities, which needs to be taken into account in the exercise of development plan policy and development management functions.

Particular designations of note in relation to the site are:

- Green Wedge (Policy EN3): 'In order to prevent the coalescence of settlements and to protect the setting of urban area'
- Safeguarded Minerals (Policy M1) - area highlighted on the Council's interactive map. However, it should be noted that the document notes, 'In most instances, development may proceed within safeguarded areas as long as developers can demonstrate that the resource is of poor quality or quantity, that it can be extracted satisfactorily prior to any development taking place, that there is an overriding need for the development or that the scale and location of the development would not have any significant impact on the possible working of the resource.'
- Built Environment and Historic Heritage (Policy SP21/4 (6)): 'The built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced...'



Extract from the Cadw map search.
the historic Kitchen Garden is
highlighted by the brown area.

Wider policies of note in relation to design and tourism are:

- SP13 - Policy TO1 (Tourism development in the countryside)
- SP21 - Policy BE1 (Design): 'All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environmental context and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places'.

Relevant Designations in Relation to Zone 4

Historic Parks and Gardens are part of Wales' national identity.

Registration identifies parks and gardens which are of special interest to Wales, and that reflect aspects of Welsh life, including places to live, work and play. The resource is worthy of protection as they provide a connection to the lives and ambitions of past generations. They are valuable and distinct places that should therefore be recognised and safeguarded for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Inclusion on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens is not a preservation order. However, such areas are identified in order to help protect their special interest, and, if necessary, manage their change so that they remain viable and sustainable in a changing social context.

The following statutory designation applies to the Gnoll Estate Country Park in which Pond Cottage is located:

Gnoll Estate and Country Park - Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)

'It is registered for the survival of its largely eighteenth-century landscape park, which is of great historic interest, in its original rural setting above Neath. It lies on the flank of the Vale of Neath, long famed for its picturesque beauty. The landscape of The Gnoll is exceptional for its combination of industrial and ornamental functions and for its strong visual relationship with the surrounding countryside.'

Listings

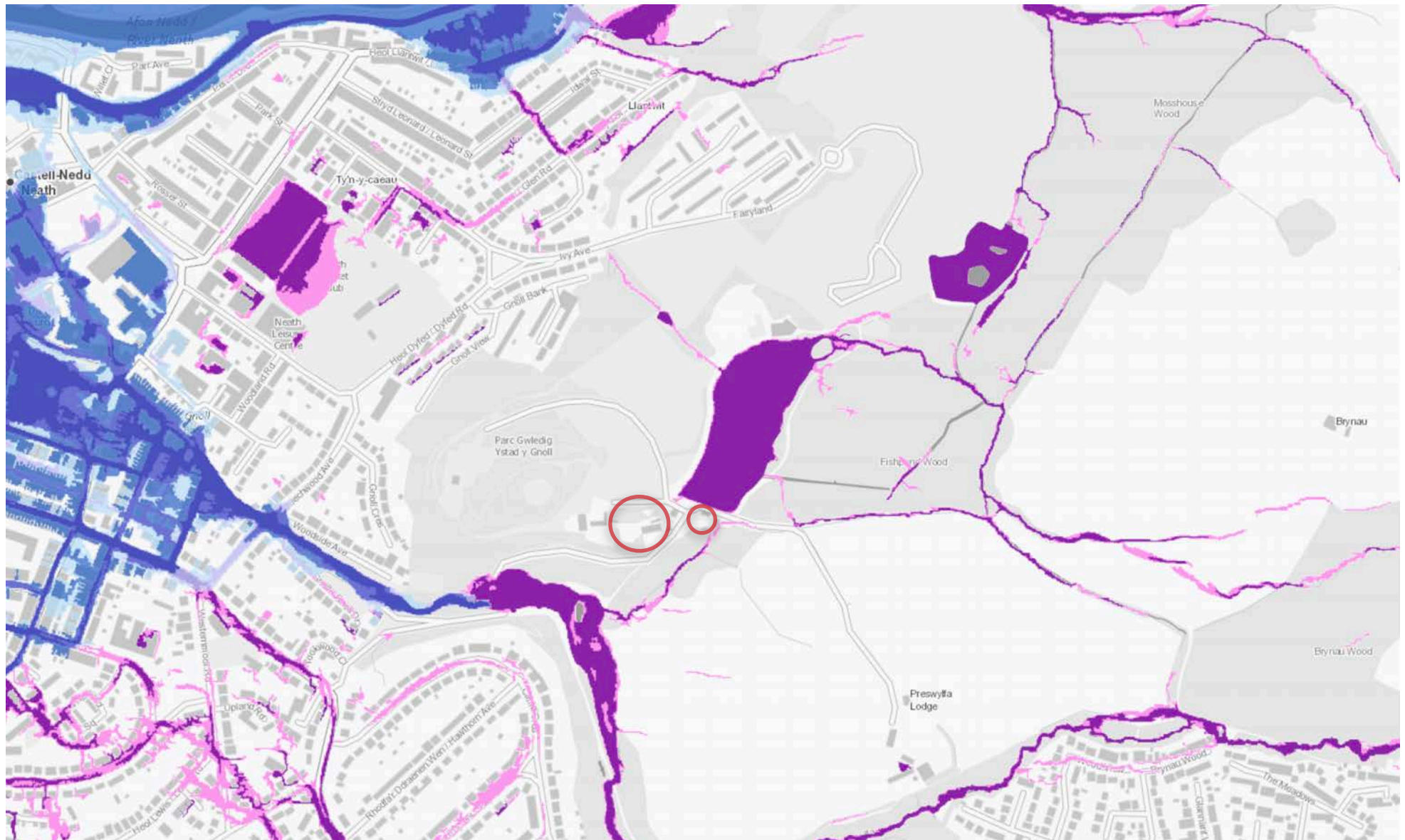
For listings relating to buildings within Gnoll Estate Country Park please refer to the Project Context Document.

Flood Risk

Flood risk assessments are used to show how the flood risk to a site, or elsewhere as a result of proposed changes to the site, can be managed as part of a development proposal. The red circle locates the Kitchen Garden and Pump House Service Yard. The map demonstrates that the site sits outside any Flood Risk Zone. Therefore a flood risk assessment will not be required going forwards.

Ecology

Gnoll Estate Country Park is a designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) (NPTSINC036) by the Local Planning Authority through the Local Development Plan (2011- 2026).



Extract from the Flood Map for Planning, showing sites and flood zones

Bat surveys have been carried out by Neath Port Talbot Ecologist (Consultancy + Planning). Bats and their roosts are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). Under Regulation 3 (4) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 local planning authorities, in exercise of their functions, are to have regard to the provisions of the 1992 *Habitats* Directive (92/43/EEC) in so far that they might be affected by those functions.

In terms of wider biodiversity, the ecologists have further input into the development proposals to initially limit any potential damage to existing habitat, and subsequently ensure advantage is taken of opportunities to enhance biodiversity going forwards.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been produced to cover ecological mitigation measures in relation to the particular habitats, any protected species and the proposed works.

The CEMP report provides details of ecological mitigation measures to be implemented prior to and during construction to protect and mitigate effects on important ecological features within the site. This will include measures to prevent impacts from accidental spillages, dust, sediment inputs, movement of machinery, refuelling etc.

Landscape and planting schedules have been prepared in consultation with Neath Port Talbot Ecologist (Consultancy + Planning).



Arboricultural Impact and Tree Protection Orders

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has also been carried out as part of the development proposals by Neath Port Talbot Arboriculturalist (Consultancy + Planning). This is attached to the application.

Previous Planning Applications

Please refer to the Project Context Document by Hiraeth Architecture for details of previous planning applications relating to the site. Further planning information is also provided by Asbri Planning.

Building Control

The Building Regulations set standards for how buildings must be constructed to achieve a minimum level of acceptable performance. The proposals for the reconstructed potting shed accommodation look to meet this. This is addressed in part via the sustainability statement that is included in this document. Other elements to highlight include:

- **Drainage** : Proposals include the installation of a foul treatment plant sized appropriately to meet the demands of projected visitor numbers. Please see associated documentation. A new sustainable drainage system will also deal with surface water drainage, with accompanying drawings setting this out.
- **Access** : Approved Document Part M sets out guidance to ensure that people are able to access and use buildings and their facilities. The Potting Sheds (units D1-D2) have been designed to ensure that they are accessible for those in Wheelchairs. Additional documents relating to accessible hotel room layouts have also been referred to in order to create inclusive spaces that allow for turning circles and accessible bathrooms. In addition to this the reception and linen store have been designed to ensure sufficient space for those with mobility issues to

work in this space, including the provision of an accessible WC and kitchenette.

- **Fire** : Fire safety guidance is set out in Approved Document Part B. The nature of these requirements have been identified and integrated into the proposals for the potting shed units and will be further developed at RIBA Stage 4.
- **Pre-fabricated cabins** are to be delivered under the Caravan Act. Safety and sustainability have been considered in their design to ensure that they are comfortable and well-insulated.



Design development image of Pod Type B showing e.g. the solar shading to windows and terrace

INVOLVEMENT

Community

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the Neath Port Talbot Council's Project Advisory Group throughout the project. This group has been chosen to represent the interests of the many staff and volunteers that input into the management and running of the Gnoll Estate Country Park. Consequently the proposed scheme is representative of their involvement, decision making and validation.

Wider consultation has also been undertaken with the surrounding community with the Community Council, neighbours and interested parties, to explain the scheme and its wider benefits. This follows initial consultation with the community on the LUF developed scheme, the responses to which have been considered and incorporated into the proposals where possible.

Pre-application Response

A comprehensive, positive and constructive pre-application consultation process has been undertaken with input from Cadw, Ecology and Arboricultural consultants proving to be particularly valuable to the scheme development. A more formal response has been collated by Asbri Planning that accompanies this application, whilst subsequent discussions and development of the proposals, have looked to address the points raised. This has largely been accomplished, however, unfortunately the timescales driven by the funding of the scheme mean that a constructive and meaningful engagement with the Design Commission for Wales has not been possible prior to the formal planning application being submitted. We feel it is important to add that we recognise the importance of peer review during the development of our

schemes. This has consequently been undertaken during the development process via in-house architectural advisors from Neath Port Talbot Council and through our internal processes.

Given the sensitivity of the designated context as a grade II* listed parkland, ongoing discussions have been held with Cadw, to ensure that the design development has been carried out in dialogue.



A community consultation event was held in relation to the LUF bid

INFORMING A DESIGN STRATEGY

Taking into consideration the requirements of the Brief, the historic context of the park and the constraints of the site, a strategic approach to the proposed kitchen garden accommodation can be developed.

The proposed site strategy should represent a careful balancing of the complex historic and environmental constraints of this site, including:

Landscaping

The Kitchen Garden should be landscaped to reference the historical arrangement of the garden within the estate, alongside taking cues from the further research into walled gardens more generally to further inform layout. Hard and soft landscaping and specific planting strategies should be developed to add specificity to the interpretation of this important asset.

Layout

Whilst little detailed drawn information is available regarding the precise layouts of the kitchen gardens at Gnoll Estate Country Park, as outlined in the previous historical analysis section, it is clear that the gardens were fruitful and productive spaces until at least the 1920s (in terms of how they are described in the Sale Catalogue (see p.xx). In addition, the aerial photograph from the 1991 report clearly shows collections of glasshouses, masonry buildings and cold frames, congregated around the potting sheds still extant on site, something that is further noted in the Cadw listing.

It will be important to achieve a sustainable density of development within the garden, that strikes a careful balance between providing rentable holiday accommodation (to ensure the development is commercially viable) whilst allowing generous areas of planting that contribute to the quality of placemaking and the interpretation of the area as an historical kitchen garden.

As seen in the historical plans (1919 and 1937) – structures were arranged along walls – their use and character determined by their orientation. As evident, those with the diamond hatch (facing south) were glazed; and those shown with a solid hatch (facing north) were likely to be masonry. This is confirmed by research into other kitchen gardens in which the back-of-house potting sheds/ stoves/ stores were arranged to the north of the wall, whilst greenhouses were congregated back-to-back with the sheds to the north of the wall.

Key aspects of this research should therefore be taken as cues for the design layout of the different elements of the proposal:

- A variety of areas, with varied planting which relates to orientation, shelter and location of existing walls;
- An emphasis on productivity manifest through organised planting and crop rotation;
- Structures largely backing onto walls;
- Isolated additional buildings to help to define space without overcrowding the garden, acknowledging that the gardens are also for holidays;

Form and Scale

The form and scale of the new-build cabins should relate to the historic precedent of greenhouses/potting sheds running along walls. In order to further develop this concept in relation to the historical research, the cabins/ potting shed accommodation should also:

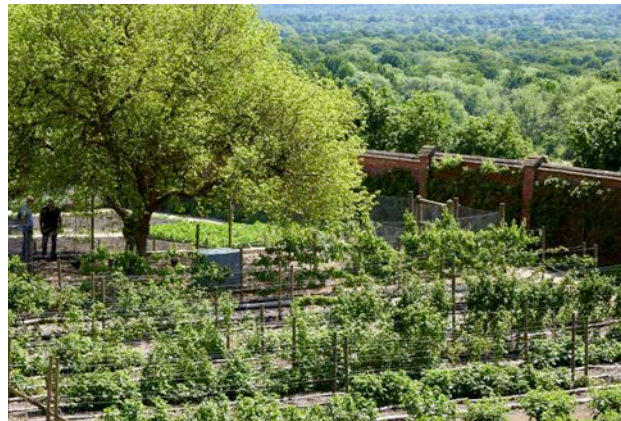
- Be distinct in form and materiality and have varied size/ style of openings, dependent on orientation of the given building and its precise location
- Sit lightly on the ground if new, whilst existing buildings can be of a more solid and permanent aesthetic;
- Have roof forms that are appropriately simple, whilst incorporating an element of visual interest to create desirable, unique places to stay.

PRECEDENT

Key precedents have informed the design of the kitchen garden landscape and associated accommodation. These include historic precedents, landscape designs, repair/ restoration projects, change of use schemes and new build cabin developments. Images and the key inspiration that has been drawn from each are included on the following pages:



RHS Garden Bridgewater: Structured planting around a central feature, with structures arranged along walls



Fruit trees trained along wires, with access between rows; edged in low box hedging



Lost Gardens of Heligan: Crop rotation - cut flowers and vegetables. Structures arranged along walls.



Gordon Castle Walled Garden. Variety of organised and productive beds, with areas of both straight and winding





Raised beds with structural plant supports



Planting against walls -more informal



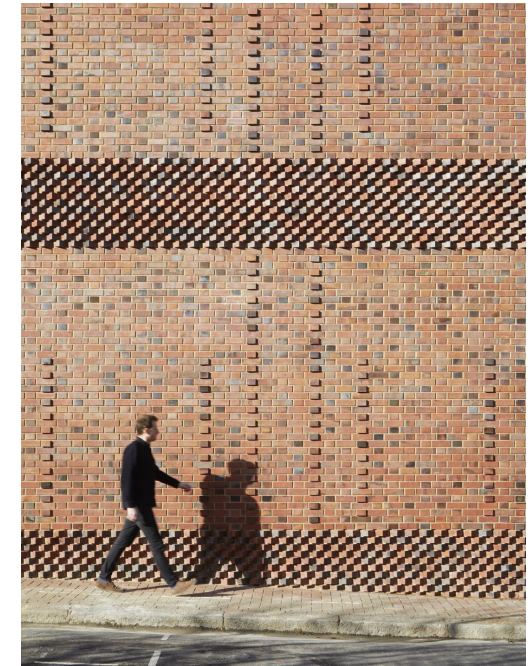
Planting against walls -formal



Productive herbs and lavender used to create a sensory, productive environment



Herbaceous borders for pollinators and cut flowers



Clockwise from left:

Neil Dusheiko Architects - Timber Fin House // Timber detailing to articulate a façade

Clementine Blakemore Lorenzo Zandri - Wraxall Yard // Open plan internal spaces with exposed timber roof
Modern proportion to openings

Haworth Tomkins: Silchester Housing & Plumstead Brick // detailing to articulate a masonry façade

Will Gamble Architects - The Parchment Works // Modern openings alongside new and historic masonry

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS



Gate to the Northern-most section of the kitchen gardens, with associated signage currently prohibiting public access.

Overview

The proposals seek to address the loss of the contribution of this key historic asset within the park and provide high quality accommodation for visitors to stay in the area overnight. At present, the kitchen garden reads as a functional but unattractive back-of-house service yard, closed to the public. The aim is therefore to re-envision the space as one that makes a positive contribution to the park as a whole.

Successful holiday cabin developments in the UK demonstrate that bespoke-designed 'Glamping' accommodation can offer simple, unique, spaces that encourage an increase in tourism and attract more people to the area. A mixed approach has been taken to the site, to provide:

- 14 no. 1 bed, 2 person cabins
- 2 no. reconstructed and slightly extended potting sheds to provide a
 - 1 no separate 1 bed/ 2 person unit
 - 1 no.1 bed/ 2 person unit and 1 no. 2 bed/ 4 person unit, that can be hired separately or linked to provide a single unit
 - Reception building - with welfare facilities for staff enabling this to be manned 24hrs if necessary.
- New ancillary buildings to provide ares for a visitor laundry, linen store, tool store and welfare space for gardeners.
- Extensive planting and paths/ hard landscaping to create a productive kitchen garden.
- 24 parking spaces to the former pump house service yard, along with 4 no. accessible/ drop off spaces within the kitchen garden area.
- Bin compound/ external covered bike storage, within enclosed and screened area, secured to provide access to accommodation users only.



View of the operational service yard from the top of Gnoll Access Road West adjacent to Pond Cottage, showing outline car park - cars concealed to lower level in non-intrusive location.

A balance has been sought across the site between maximising capacity and a desire to create positive external spaces integrated within the scheme and based upon historical research and precedents. Cabins are therefore designed and arranged to create sheltered, private outdoor terraces that are associated with each of the cabins and face away from one another, focusing their outlook and connection on external planting and landscaping. In addition, a number of external seating areas for use by anyone staying in the units have been provided across the gardens to enhance the variety of the offer

The Pump House Service Yard

To ensure that parking is located discretely in the park and to limit the potential for pedestrian and vehicle interaction, it is proposed that parking for the new visitor accommodation is located in the former pump house service yard. This will involve demolishing the existing service yard buildings, aside from the pump house, and setting out parking on a gravel surface as shown on the attached drawings and impression to the left.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Feasibility Study on the Potting Sheds/ Glass Houses (Area 2)

With regards to Area 2 of the Kitchen Gardens, a feasibility study was carried out by Hiraeth Architecture and MJB Associates in April 2022 to assess the potential of the site for accommodation. The study developed the following accommodation within the U-shaped arrangement of extant sheds on the site:

- 2 no. 2 bedroom units
- 1 no. 1 bedroom unit
- A central courtyard, landscaped to provide a private outdoor seating/ congregating space

LUF and RIBA Stage 2

An early site strategy for the Kitchen Gardens more widely was then developed as part of work undertaken for the LUF application. This sought to balance the various constraints, opportunities and resultant key drivers outlined in the Interpretation section of this report. In relation to the wider kitchen garden, the options set out to provide cabin structures within the former kitchen gardens, together with the redevelopment of derelict structures and partially extant structures as lodges. This was submitted as part of the LUF bid. It was then further developed into a Stage 2 report, following the successful bid and award of significant investment for Gnoll Park. This produced two summary approaches that were developed and considered in relation to Pond Cottage and the Kitchen Gardens. In developing the two options, the opportunity was taken to configure them in a manner that looked to enhance and reinterpret the former area.

Option 1 - Pond Cottage would be developed as high quality self catering accommodation with a cluster of 10 high quality wooden pods with ensuite and shower facilities arranged within the kitchen gardens and the reconstruction of a further 5 units set within the potting sheds and on the footprint of other buildings to the northwest corner of the site;

Option 2 - Pond Cottage would be developed into a tea room that would distribute food and beverage offerings around the parkland, providing an additional and different offer from the Visitor Centre with a focus on afternoon tea and cakes. This would also include toilet provision for the park. At this point in the design development, this option presented 13-high quality wooden pods within the kitchen garden and the reconstruction of a further 5 units set within the potting sheds and on the footprint of other buildings to the northwest corner of the site. The additional 3 pods are present in Option 2 to take account of the conversion of Pond Cottage into catering offering, which would result in the accommodation provision submitted as part of the LUF bid being reduced. Timber clad, the new cabins would provide bedroom, living, kitchen and en-suite facilities, whilst drainage to these would be incorporated below the pathways and terminate in a septic tank.

Initial design moves in both options looked to site structures against boundary walls as typifies such structures in walled gardens. In addition to the use of the existing and proposed buildings, the objectives of the LUF bid further looked to restore the kitchen gardens around the proposed new accommodation - using the design of the cabins to help interpret the kitchen garden, whilst creating a high quality, desirable setting in which to stay. Fundamental to the reinterpretation of the garden

was forming a structured approach. As remnants of the area, the two existing walls to the gardens were to be retained.

In both options, a mix of formal and informal areas were conceptually arranged to identify the area as a kitchen garden and therefore help inform the narrative of the house and the estate to visitors to the park. This included a more informal northern area referencing the working area of the garden, which would have provided supporting structures such as sheds and storage. Again cabins were placed against the wall and to boundaries, with planting focussing on edible herbs and fruit trees, with gravel areas giving external spaces for sitting out.

These options were further tested through Community Consultation and discussion with Cadw. After this, Option 2 was found to be the preferred scheme and therefore the proposals were grouped into two distinct projects for further development to Planning Stage. This application therefore relates to that of the Kitchen Garden accommodation and associated, former service Pump House Service yard (to be car parking). A separate application is being submitted for the conversion of Pond Cottage into a Tea Room and the works associated with this.

The two options are included on the following pages, as part of the design development for this site.

Kitchen Garden - Option 1

(Note that the layout of Pond Cottage remains as existing in this option with the building refurbished)



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2223 SK 210 Rev.

Neath Port Talbot CBC
Gnoll Park Estate

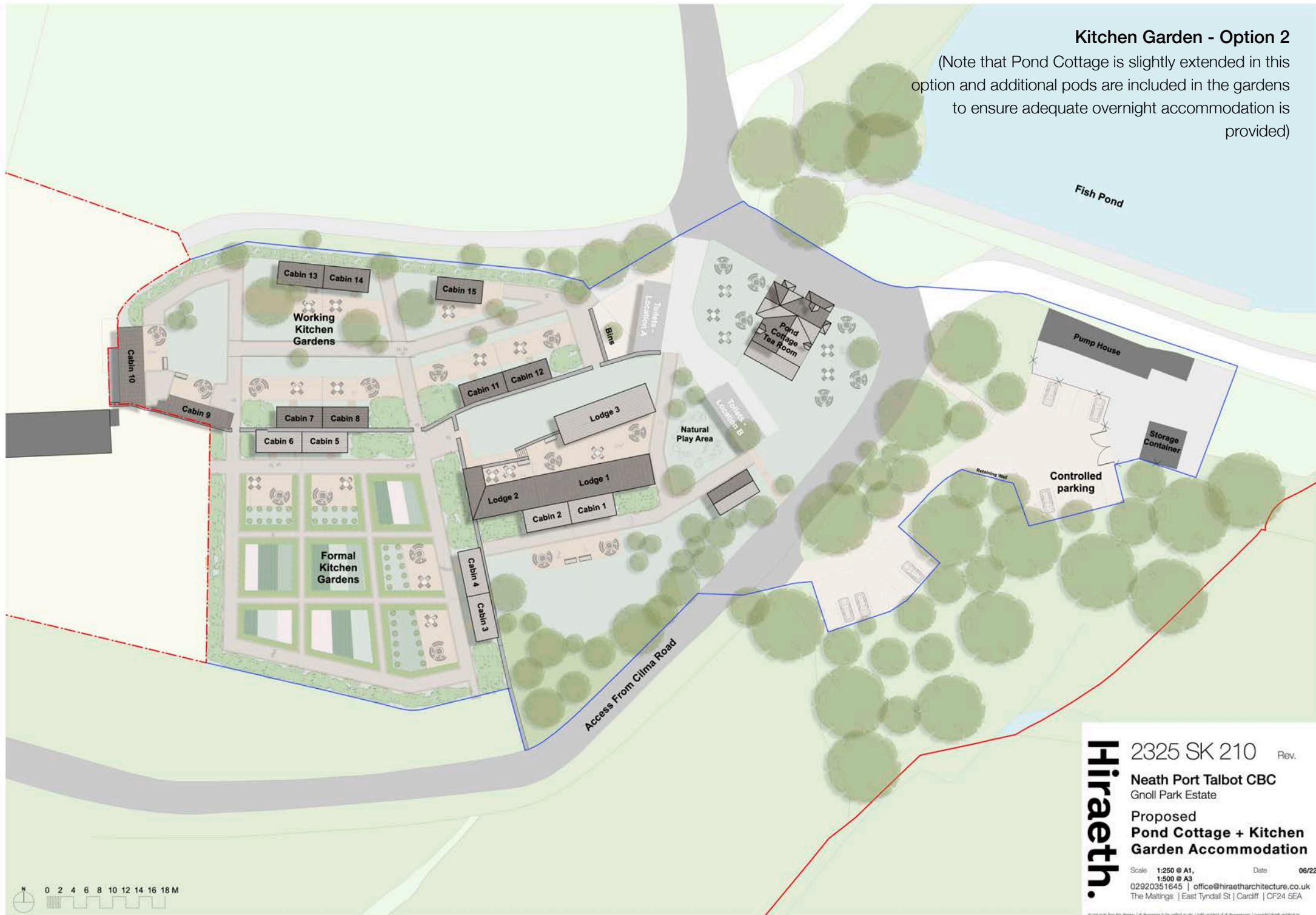
Proposed
**Pond Cottage + Kitchen
Garden Accommodation**

Scale 1:250 @ A1, 1:500 @ A3 Date 06/22
02920351645 | office@hiraetharchitecture.co.uk
The Maltings | East Tyndall St | Cardiff | CF24 5EA

do not scale from this drawing | all dimensions to be verified on site | not to architect of all discrepancies | copyright hiraeth architecture

Kitchen Garden - Option 2

(Note that Pond Cottage is slightly extended in this option and additional pods are included in the gardens to ensure adequate overnight accommodation is provided)



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Gnoll Park Estate

Proposed
**Pond Cottage + Kitchen
Garden Accommodation**

Scale 1:250 @ A1, 1:500 @ A3 Date 06/22
02920351645 | office@hiraetharchitecture.co.uk
The Matings | East Tyndal St | Cardiff | CF24 5EA

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The kitchen gardens at the Mulgrave Estate, North Yorkshire, showing distinction between buildings to the North and South sides of the garden walls. A sense of formality and productivity within the bounds of the garden is evident.

Stage 3 development

Subsequent to this key decision being made, the scheme was further developed in relation to additional historical research and due to the red line boundary being clarified, which resulted in the planned lodge to the North West of the garden (Cabin 10) being outside the ownership boundary. As such, the two proposed lodges were replaced with a single pre-fabricated module.

Where RIBA Stage 2 established high-level historical information and the requirements for accommodation on the site in the form of key principles and initial concept layouts, Stage 3 has then built on additional archive research and a more accurate topographical survey to further develop the scheme to the detailed designs which are submitted as part of this application.

The developed design started with the landscape – the aerial image and historical plans - and looked to reinterpret this with hard and soft landscaping, planting specifications and the layout of built structures within the gardens. The four areas identified within the site analysis have been taken forward in the design development to create four areas with distinctive characters which relate to historical research, orientation, views and topography.

Planting and the positioning of buildings relate to this and are fully described on the following pages, along with justification to demonstrate how the research and interpretation has influenced and informed the layouts.

Key moves have retained the key garden walls and designed two distinct types of pod, to build on the research which showed that buildings to the north side of walls were distinct in design from those to the south of walls. These pre-fabricated pods have therefore been developed differently in terms of massing, fenestration and materials in order to take cues from the historical precedent of potting sheds and glass houses to create a structured approach to the gardens which will help with the historical interpretation of this area, whilst also providing an economically viable holiday location. Further explanation of the development and resultant design of these pod types is given in the following chapter in relation to objectives of good design.

Pod Type A was developed to reference the back of house potting shed structures which were generally sited to the north and east of the garden walls. As previously outlined, these structures often backed onto the garden walls as lean-to structures, had limited glazing in comparison to the glasshouses and were of a solid masonry construction. This has been reflected in the scale of openings, overall massing and materiality as shown in the development image to the left.



*Design development image of Pod Type A -
Based on the back of house shed structures typically found in Kitchen Gardens*

\

Pod Type B was developed to reference the glass houses which were sited to the south and west of the garden walls. As previously outlined, these structures often backed onto garden walls as lean-to structures that mirrored the arrangement of the linear back sheds to the north of the wall. They were heavily glazed, framed structures with a clear rhythm to their fenestration. This has been reflected in the scale of openings, overall massing and materiality as shown in the development image to the left.



Design development image of Pod Type B -

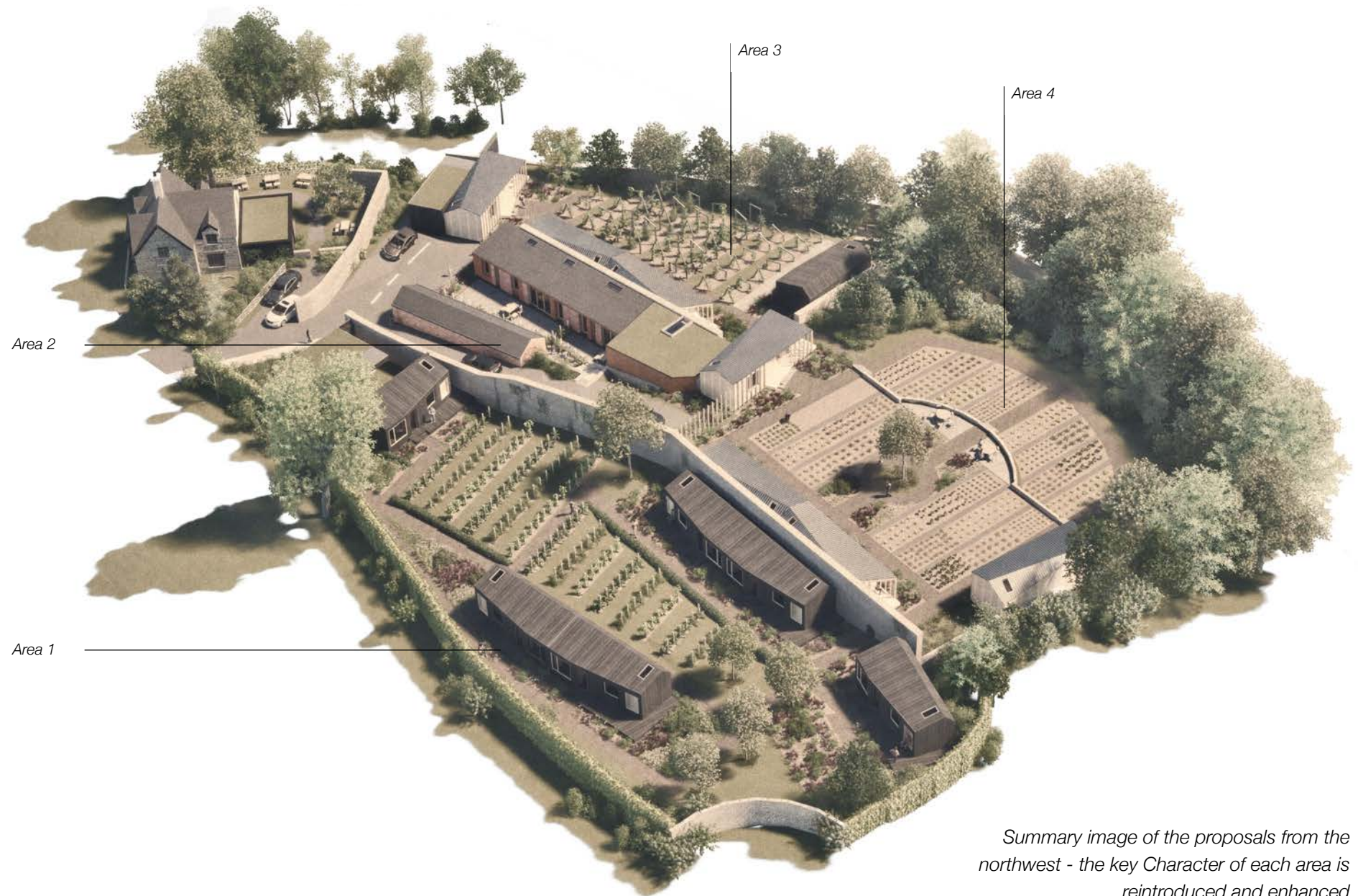
Pod type B aesthetically derived from the regular structural form of timber glass houses

Further to discussions with Cadw, the other key step has been the decision to retain the key tall garden walls, but take down the derelict buildings within area 2, and to reconstruct these to modern standards of construction, in a red brick masonry construction, whilst retaining the characteristic U-shaped layout. This will allow for minor amendments to the footprint, which will allow the structures to reach the necessary levels of thermal performance and to accommodate the necessary width for the units to be fully accessible. Through discussions with Cadw it was concluded that rebuilding these buildings was appropriate, rather than working with the buildings in their current derelict state.

The following section provides a detailed explanation of design decisions and how these have curated a proposal that responds to constraints, opportunities, site analysis and historic context.



The overgrown derelict, lean-to potting sheds will be taken down



Character

An understanding of the distinctive character of the site's setting, both in built form and broader historic context, has played a key role in the development of the proposals.

The design of the proposals therefore aims to compliment the character of the rediscovered and re-landscaped kitchen garden and to respect the working service yard character of the former pump house service yard where parking is to be provided.

The four areas of the garden have been respected and interpreted in terms of orientation and archival research to create distinct zones of productivity and restful zones for holiday accommodation. Area 1 has been retained as a north-facing area, with 6 no. pods of the 'potting shed' type (A), positioned along walls and in a similar position to the linear building shown on the historic maps (1884, 1919 and 1937). The historical aerial photo of this compartment suggests diagonal rows of fruit vines, which would be consistent with research into kitchen gardens generally and with the descriptions in the 1921 sale catalogue, which suggests the whole garden was productive. Thus, a collection of Type A pods, fruit vines and fruit trees define the character of this area.

Area 2 seeks to retain its current character and, whilst the buildings are taken down, the two linear runs will be reconstructed to largely the same footprint. The U-shaped collection will be retained, with the construction of a new building to the west. Whilst the footprint of this is more drastically changed, it is a more modern building essential to the

RESPONSE TO THE OBJECTIVES OF GOOD DESIGN

operation of the proposals and on balance it is therefore considered acceptable.

Area 3 was once defined by glass houses and cold frames set at right angles to the U-shaped potting sheds (refer 1991 photo (p.22) and Cadw listing (p.5)). As such, this area comprises Type A and B pods (dependent on orientation) and a series of growing frames, which reference the framed structures that once ran north-south within this area.

Area 4 is the other key, south facing portion of the gardens and this has therefore been designated as a vegetable growing space, with low beds which will be planted in rows, allowing for seasonal crop rotation. All pods in this area are of Type B (glass house type) to add to the formality of this area. The path curves around a central feature, and terminates against the existing woodland boundary with a semi-circular path. This responds to the immediate context and also references the precedent study, which found parallel paths with some formal distortion to be a common feature.



Rows of straight planting and more ornamental curved planting seen alongside one another at Gordon Castle Walled Garden.



Area 4 showing clear demarcation of vegetable/ flower beds and South/ West facing cabins of the Type B design (to reference glass houses)

Appearance:

The proposed built development, has been designed to complement, and be integrated with, an extensive landscape design to reinstate an interpretation of the historic kitchen garden that was associated with Gnoll House. This will reinforce the distinctive identity of the Kitchen Garden as a former integral part of the running of this historic house.

Siting:

The pre-fabricated pods have been located with reference to the key research findings regarding the historic layouts of kitchen gardens. The two different types of pods (one based on potting sheds; the other on greenhouse structures), are orientated within the gardens to reinforce this historical link. Type A (the potting shed pod) occupies north and east facing walls generally, whilst Type B (the greenhouse pod) occupies south and west facing walls generally.

There are two exceptions to this rule within the layouts, which have been amended due to the distinction of zones within the garden. Pod B3, whilst on an east-facing wall, is of the greenhouse type as it sits within the more formally laid-out garden. Pod A5 is on a west-facing wall but is of the potting shed type as it sits within a zone where all other pods are of the potting shed type, in an area of informal edge planting and rows of fruit bushes, adjacent to the bike store/ laundry building, thus more suited to referencing a service building typology.

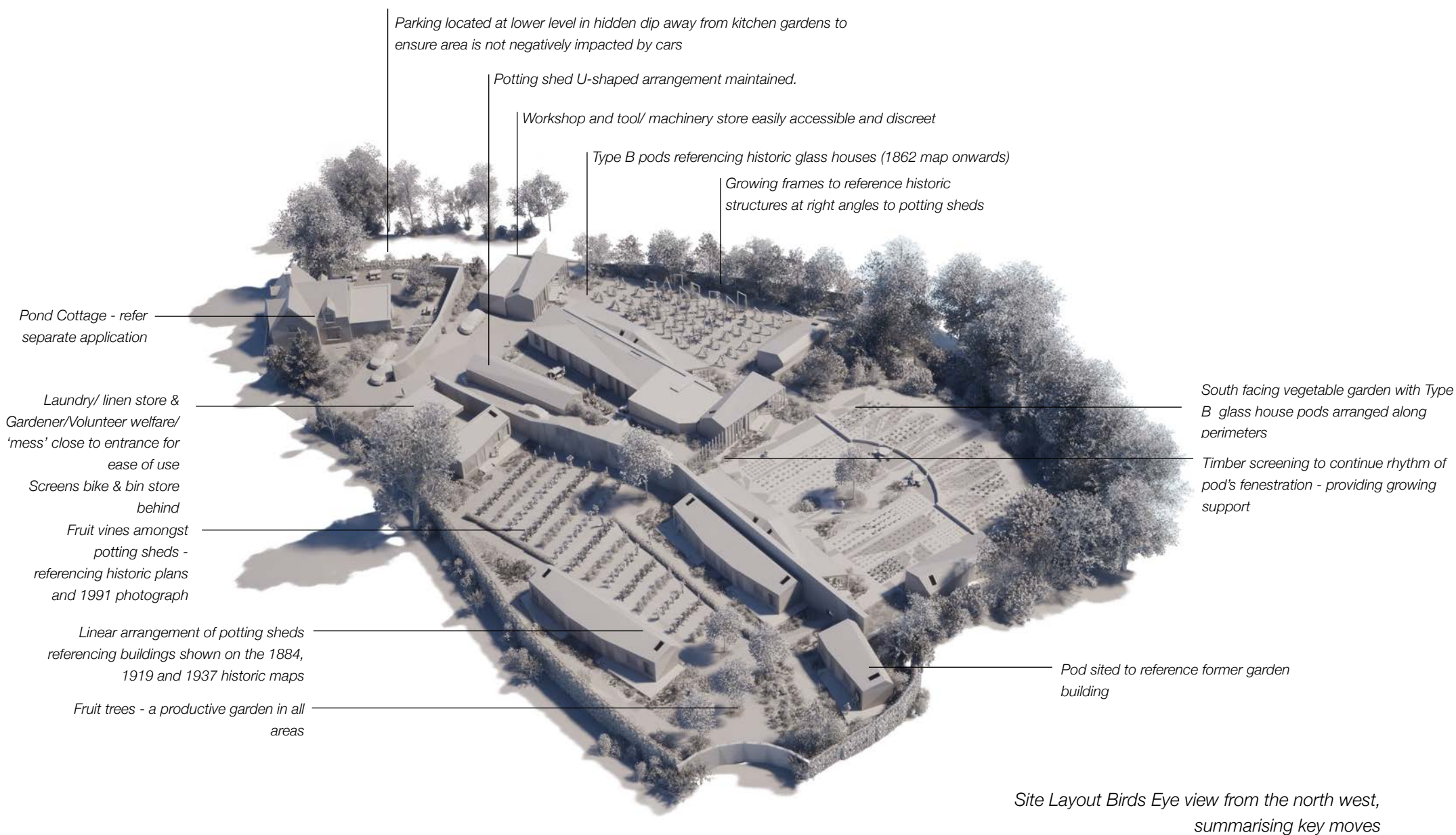
The site-built elements of the project have also been positioned with reference to the archival research and in order to better define the spaces for the public. Thus a simple new building housing the linen store/ laundry & 'mess room' sits adjacent to the entrance. This acts as a screen to the necessary bin and bike storage for this part of the development and is

easily accessible to all without guests having to walk through other areas of the accommodation.

A further service building is sited along the Pond Cottage Boundary to house a workshop and tool/machinery store. This is screened with two new timber screens, which form a service yard to act as an additional store for equipment for the maintenance/ upkeep of the gardens. The outdoor yard could also be used to work behind the scenes on potting/ planting and incorporates a covered portion formed by an overhanging roof. This is sited so as to be discreet whilst being easily accessible to volunteers and/or gardeners without interrupting guests during their stay.

Finally, the northernmost building in area 2 (where the extant structures are on site) is rebuilt and amended to form a reception building. This is centrally located between all the accommodation areas and is easily accessible. Repurposing this building as a reception meant its original footprint could largely be maintained, which would not have been possible if this was an accommodation unit as originally proposed (as this would have necessitated a much deeper building).

A small extension is proposed to the existing footprint of Unit D2 to the west. Whilst on the face of it the plan could be more compact, various important drivers have resulted in the proposed size. This is necessary firstly to provide the required internal space to ensure the units can be accessible to all. The western extension also provides a 'back' for the pod units on the other side of the wall. It is necessary that these pods are sited here, as if they were further east they would block the existing opening to the potting sheds in the south wall, thereby restricting light into, and views out of, the deeper plan of Unit D1.



The pre-fabricated pods (A1-A7 and B1-B7) have been carefully laid out within the overarching rules of orientation/type to ensure adequate separation and privacy between units, whilst also reinforcing the historical narrative. To this end they are sited against walls and the windows to main living spaces and the terraces associated with the different pods are always laid out to focus away from one another. This is achieved both through the design of the pods, where the form provides privacy and separation between adjoining pods (refer explanation under ‘form’), and through their overall siting within the gardens (see diagram to the right). In all areas landscaping and planting is carefully located to further enhance privacy.



Site Layout highlighting principal views from living spaces within the cabins and the focus of their external terraces

Scale, Massing + Form:

The various structures within the Kitchen Gardens have been designed so that the scale, massing and form of the structures and landscape are sympathetic to the context and help to interpret its history.

The pre-fabricated accommodation pods have been designed to reference the linear runs of potting sheds/ greenhouses in their form.

As seen in the historical typology section, structures against walls were generally mono-pitch, at times having a three quarter span roof. The structures sat below the height of the tall garden walls - something that has been maintained in this design where possible against the taller existing walls.

Pod Type A takes cues from three quarter span roofs to create an internally interesting space for holidays and to gain a small amount of additional head height, whilst maintaining reference to historical structures. Sited generally to the north and east facing walls, its façade is more closed to reference a potting shed.

Pod Type B is designed to be mono-pitch at one end, morphing to a dual pitch at the other. Again this takes cues from the historical research which found that glass houses against walls were both mono and dual pitch, whilst also creating an architecturally interesting form and internal space for holidays. Generally sited to the east and west of walls, the façade of Type B pods is more open, and has a repeating rhythm of battens to reference timber framed glass houses, thereby helping to interpret the gardens.

The structures in area 2 have been designed to be reconstructed, taking cues from those existing on site, whilst amending them to be suitable as accommodation units or reception facilities respectively. Unit D2, and part of Unit D1 is housed within the north facing mono-pitch run. This will be reconstructed as a simple mono-pitch volume, with the footprint marginally amended to ensure that the accommodation units can be accessible and therefore ensure a percentage of the offer on site is bespoke designed for those with impaired mobility and the offer is inclusive. It is proposed that this run will also be extended to the west beyond the stone wall (refer also 'siting' for a detailed explanation). This extension will be finished in flemish bond red brick with raised stretchers, to help this read as an extension to an original footprint.

The main part of Unit D1 is housed within the later-added east facing section of the collection of buildings and, as such, it is proposed to extend the footprint of this building to the west. This allows for the necessary space to make this unit accessible. It is proposed that the roof of this section is higher, stepping up to the garden above and creating a generous internal volume, providing a wall against which the mono-pitch run can terminate. This will help the mono-pitch run to read as an historic volume further reinforcing the history of the site. Again, as a modern extension, this part of the scheme will be finished in flemish bond red brick with raised stretchers, to ensure a simple palette of colour in this area, whilst also differentiating it from its more historic neighbour.

Building E3 (the reception) is to be rebuilt to a slightly extended footprint compared to the existing building on the site. The existing southern eaves height is currently inadequate to house a use other than growing (the lower eaves of the mono-pitch is only 1.7m, and with the extended footprint will drop to around 1.2m carrying on the mono pitch at the same

angle). It is therefore proposed that a dual pitched roof is added to this building. This will allow for the northern wall to be maintained at its current height, thus retaining the existing character of this area in relation to the sloped access to the north, and for the lower eaves to be raised to match. Building on historical research that suggests this element of the scheme was a glasshouse, the dual pitch addition will be finished in flemish bond brick with raised header courses to give a sense of rhythm which references the timber framed glass house, whilst also providing a closed façade to avoid the overlooking of units D1 and D2. This will ensure they have a private aspect despite their proximity to the reception building.

Mix of tenures:

Planning Solutions Ltd. have produced a report which assesses the proposed number of units in relation to that submitted as part of the LUF bid.

The proposed units are:

- 14 no. 1 bed units - Cabins A1-A7 and B1 - B7)
- 1 no. 2 bed accessible unit (Unit D1)
- 1 no. 1 bed accessible unit (Unit D2)

In addition units D1 and D2 have been designed so that they can be rented together - with a connecting door which would then be unlocked to allow for free-flowing internal movement and an external gate which links their private external spaces in a similar manner.

Placemaking:

Of critical importance to the proposals is an interaction between built elements and integrated landscaping and amenity areas. The proposed cabins are arranged not in the most dense or intensive arrangement, but in response to historical siting. The kitchen garden has been seen as the driving force to the layout - with pods and other buildings arranged to help interpret this, whilst also providing pleasant holiday accommodation. The different areas have their own distinctive identities, with area 1 populated with cabins of the Potting Shed type (A) and being reserved for fruit trees and vines; area 2 reconstructing a range of buildings which take cues from the buildings extant on the site, around a central courtyard, which can be temporarily subdivided into private outdoor space for Unit D1 and D2 using planters on casters with a functional potting shed aesthetic; area 3 taking cues from the many greenhouse/ cold frame structures which populated this area, with cabins of the glasshouse type (B) and potting shed type (A) arranged around rows of structured planting oriented to match the historic location of glasshouses and cold frames; and finally area 4 providing a structured approach to planting which allows for more formally arranged vegetable beds and associated crop rotation. See also 'Character'.

Mobility:

Proposed improvements to path surfacing will aid accessibility of the site generally. Whilst the proposed pre-fabricated pods will only be accessible via steps, 2 units (ref. D1 and D2 - housed within the former Potting Sheds) have been designed to be fully accessible and are conveniently located close to the entry point and reception building.

Integration:

The Pre-fabricated pods are integrated through their design, materiality and placement, which reference the historical typology and layout of potting sheds/ glass houses (refer Siting, Scale Massing + Form). In addition, their terraces are set back from the path edge and sit 0.45m above path level, allowing the plinths to form a vertical backdrop to a bed of planting. This will increase privacy and soften the edges of the structures to create an integrated proposal in which structures and landscaping sit comfortably alongside one another.

Buildings E1 and E2 have flat green roofs to minimise their massing and avoid forms that compete with the character of the kitchen gardens.

The historical U-shaped arrangement of the former potting sheds has been maintained in order to integrate this part of the proposals historically within the context. Units D1 and D2 are integrated through their materiality, forming a red brick collection, typical of back of house potting sheds. All extensions are finished in a flemish bond brick with raised stretchers to differentiate these additions from the original forms - enabling an historical reading of the site. This is also reminiscent of the patchwork aesthetic of garden structures that were often patched up and amended over time. Building E3 (the reception building) is integrated through the retention of the existing red brick lean to form in a red brick running bond. This is necessarily extended upwards to form a pitched roof in order to create a habitable height. This will be articulated in a flemish bond with raised headers to suggest the rhythm of a timber framed greenhouse in this location, thereby integrating the building with its current context through a simple material palette, whilst also referencing its historic use as a glass house (refer also 'materiality').



Area 2 U-shaped collection showing brickwork detailing to extensions and old glass house to demonstrate their historic progression and use, whilst maintaining a simple palette of materials. Landscaping shown indicatively.



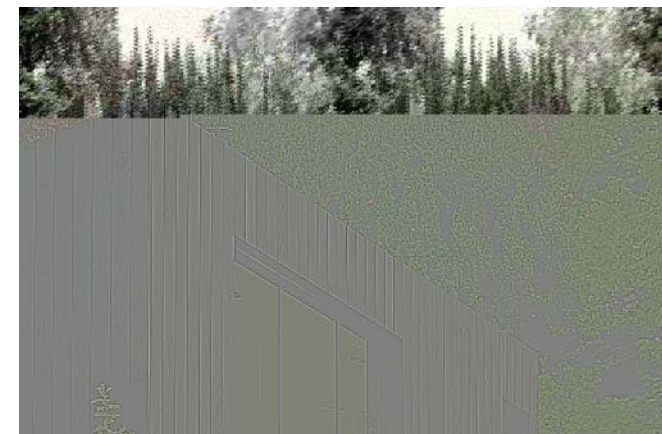
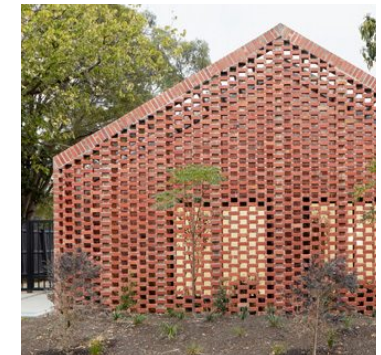
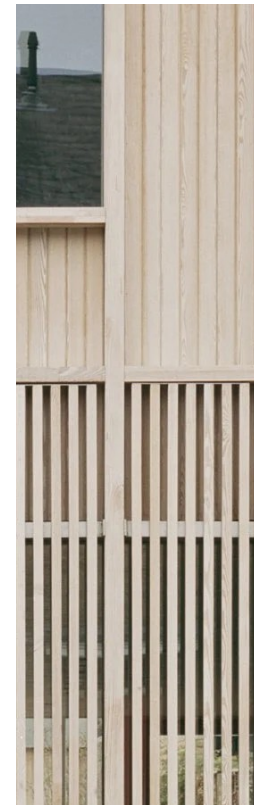
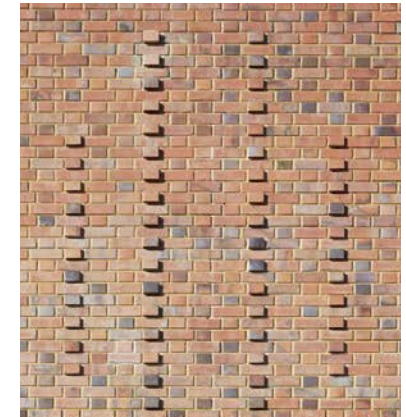
Area 1 - showing materiality and landscaping around Pod Type A (potting shed typology) - the buildings are architecturally and historically integrated within the site

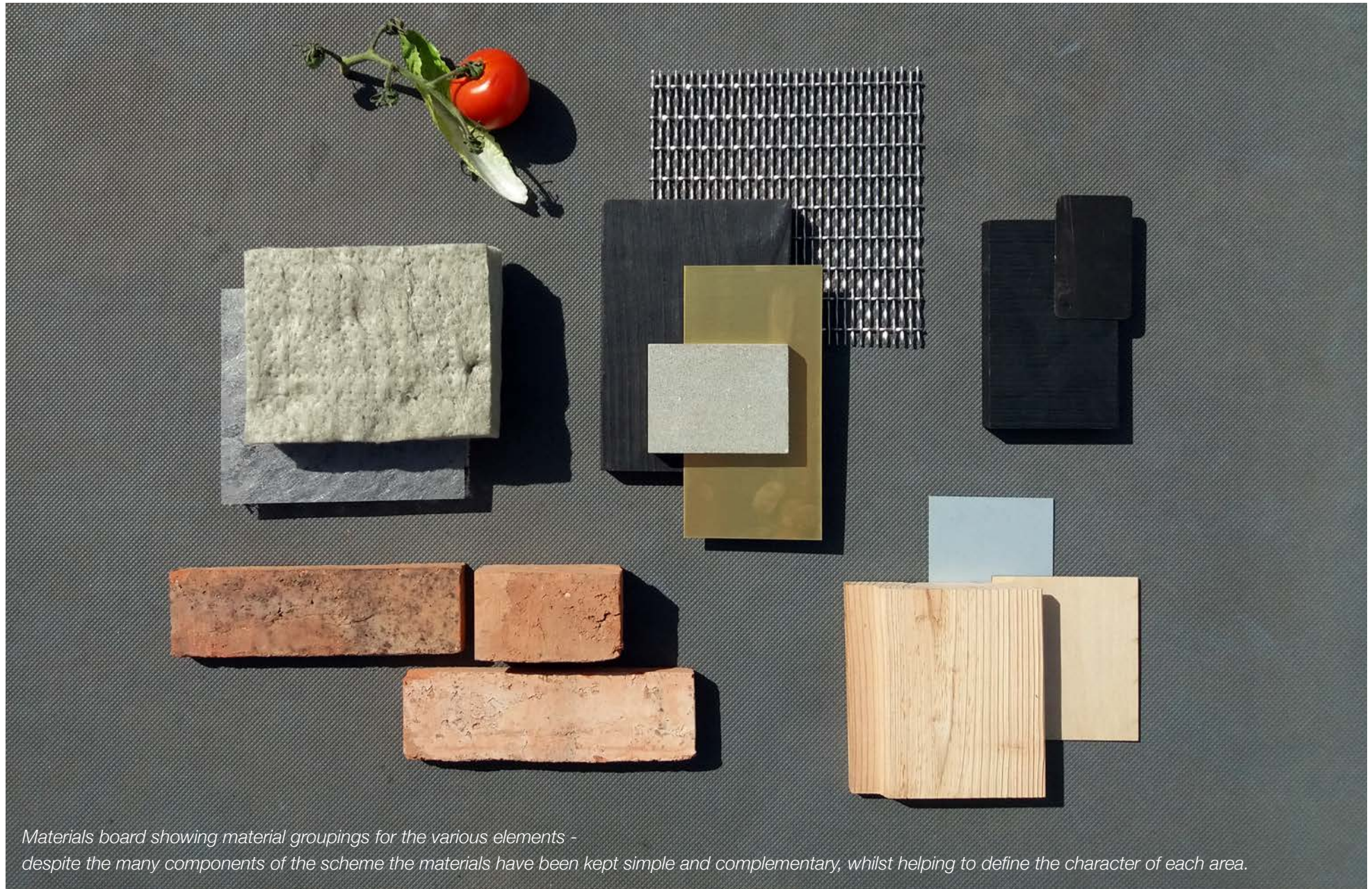
Materiality:

The material palette for the pre-fabricated pods has been chosen to reinforce the difference in type and orientation. Type A (the potting shed pod) is clad in blackened timber to walls and roof, creating a monolithic, closed and functional aesthetic. Type B (the glasshouse pod) is clad in natural timber, with repeating battens that extend across the façade and in front of the terrace, creating a rhythm associated with framed glasshouses. The roof is to be the colour of milled aluminium in order to create a light weight plane.

Red brick has been chosen to create a simple palette for area 2, which builds on the existing material palette within this area. Changes in brick bond will then be used to demarcate new elements. The extensions to D1 and D2 will be finished in a flemish bond with a projecting stretchers. A variation to brick bond will also be used to reference the fact that building E3 (the reception) was once a glasshouse. This will be achieved through creating the impression of a framed building over the mono-pitch brick plinth, by using a flemish bond with projecting headers at 572mm centres. This will ensure a simple and monolithic appearance to the materiality of this area, whilst creating visual interest. In this way an honesty regarding new and old elements of the scheme can also be achieved.

Other service buildings (E1 and E2) will be finished in blackened timber with grass roofs. This material choice ties in with the service building potting shed typology of cabin A and demarcates these buildings as functional to the operation of the area, as the potting sheds of the past were functional to the operation of the kitchen garden.





Materials board showing material groupings for the various elements - despite the many components of the scheme the materials have been kept simple and complementary, whilst helping to define the character of each area.



Area 3 - Framed growing structures reference the now missing greenhouses and cold frames that once sat at right angles to the range of glass houses which once backed onto the surviving tall south facing wall.

Proposed Access and Car Parking

Car parking for the accommodation has intentionally been limited within the confines of the kitchen gardens to provide 4 no. drop-off/ accessible spaces only. The majority of required long-stay parking spaces (1 per. bedroom) are then located in the former Pump House Service Yard. This area is within a short walking distance of the accommodation and sits at a lower level to the gardens and the Fish Pond. This, and the existing trees/ vegetation provide natural screening, thus ensuring that the car park does not negatively impact on the setting of the grade II* listed Park & Garden, and associated enjoyment by visitors.

Access for vehicles and pedestrians from the public highway to this car park will be from Cimla Road. Here, an existing road climbs up the steep topography into the park. This road is currently restricted to private vehicles and is only used for authorised deliveries and pedestrian access more generally. The proposals aim to maintain the restricted access along this road, allowing only those pre-booked to stay in the accommodation to drive up via this route. Clear signage to the junction with Cimla Road/ Rockwood Close would be installed.

Access into the car park itself will be controlled via a barrier to ensure that only accommodation users are able to park here. Once visitors have unloaded and moved their cars, access from this point on is via pedestrianised areas and paths which run around the site.

Landscape

Areas of hard and soft landscaping, as illustrated in the Landscaping Plans, are designed to provide high quality amenity areas for those staying in the accommodation, alongside safe routes for the movement of pedestrians and vehicles, whilst interpreting the history of this zone of the park. The rain gardens which form part of a sustainable drainage scheme will promote ecology within the site which is currently starkly absent.

‘As part of the restoration and development of the kitchen garden a new planting scheme has been developed. Key themes for the planting design are the re-establishment of traditional kitchen garden staples such as trained espalier fruit trees, vegetable beds and mixed herbaceous beds for cut flowers, together with more contemporary features such as rain gardens providing a drainage attenuation function and sculptural climbing plant supports evoking the traditional glass house forms that would have featured within the garden. Planting species have been chosen in some instances for historical relevance and for visual interest, ecological diversity and to support site drainage systems. Popular species which would have been available in the 18th century when the garden was originally developed have been interwoven with contemporary cultivars and forms to evoke a garden rooted in the past which is also moving with the times.’ [Davies Landscape Architects].

Conclusion

On balance, it is considered that the proposals offer a high quality, legible development that reinforces a sense of place and compliments the distinctive character of the listed Park. The aesthetic generated by the use of reconstructed potting sheds and prefabricated cabins which reference the historic form and layout of greenhouses and potting sheds sit comfortably within the site, improving the presentation of the kitchen garden in its wider setting.

Construction Strategy

Together with the design proposals, construction proposals are also of significant consideration when working on such a tight site. In order to manage a large portion of the safety of the build, the use of pre-fabricated methods for the pods will enable a significant element of the works to be undertaken of site in a safe and secure 'factory' environment.



Area 4 - The pods are pre-fabricated and will be delivered to site to sit on pre-laid foundations to suit the levels of the land

Environmental Sustainability

In order to meet the UK's commitment for decarbonisation, our construction industry must fundamentally change its approach to design, performance and construction of our built environment. Wales has committed to a framework of carbon reduction which will result in the revision of Building Regulation standards particularly in regard to energy performance but whilst we wait to see the effects on regulations, we believe that we must be delivering projects of today that are future proofed and offer a truly sustainable long-term solution. Consequently the proposal developed for the Kitchen Gardens seeks to consider the whole life of the development.

In considering the nature of these objectives we have prepared and taken into consideration with the design team a number of factors -

- analysis of the site's physical and environmental constraints and opportunities including sun path and shading, the natural and built environment, accessibility, ecology and vegetation.
- analysis of the project's use and users, considering when the various elements will be in use, for how long and for what type of activities.
- a knowledge of existing construction standards and potential future changes specifically in regards to the national and regional low carbon strategies.

The UK General Building Council's Net Zero Building Framework Definition sets out a useful framework for considering and categorising sustainability priorities. It adopts 4 categories in order of application;

- Reduce Construction Impacts
- Reduce Operational Energy Use
- Increase Renewable Energy Supply
- Offset Any Remaining Carbon.

Regardless of whether a project attains to be 'Net Zero Carbon' or not, the framework sets out a sensible categorisation of sustainability objectives for all projects. High aspirations for sustainability does not have to increase the cost of development, and if considered in a holistic manner will often dramatically improve whole life costs - that being the cost of construction, operational costs including energy and maintenance, and cost of demolition, disposal and / or reuse.

In this context, the following sets out some of the principles that are relevant to the brief development.

Reduce Construction Impacts

Carbon emissions during the construction phase will be considered throughout the design development process:

- Materials, systems and skills will be sourced locally as far as realistically possible, reducing embodied carbon through transportation and ensuring investment in the local economy.
- Innovative offsite construction methods will be used offering potential to dramatically improve efficiency over traditional onsite construction through;
 - the reduction of waste materials,
 - improving quality control to strictly limit the design : as built performance gap and reduce defects,
 - reducing the impact of construction activities including noise, ground disturbance and on and offsite vehicle movements.
- Low carbon construction materials and systems will be at the centre of the construction solution. Rejecting materials generated from the petrochemical industries such as insulation products and PVC based windows and doors not only reduces the associated high embodied carbon, but also encourages the use of natural, recycled and recyclable materials - materials that can offer a significant impact on occupant' health and wellbeing through improvements in acoustics and indoor air quality and comfort.
- Careful consideration will be given to material performance during construction, in use and at the end of life. Materials will be selected that are appropriate within the proposed context, ensuring that there is no loss of performance throughout the lifetime of the intervention.

Reduce Operational Energy

Energy demand and consumption throughout the project's life will aim to be reduced through a holistic consideration of the design, specification and construction of the development. The proposed scheme has therefore looked to address sustainable principles from the outset by adopting a general approach that sequentially looks to:

- Reduce the amount of energy that the building uses
- Maximise the free gains that are available to the site
- Address the energy source.

Whilst a 'fabric first' approach will be adopted which prioritises a high-performance fabric incorporating high levels of insulation and dramatically reducing drafts and heat loss through air gaps and thermal bridging, in conjunction with a careful placement of openings, where possible, which has looked to maximise the efficiency of the external fabric.

The approach has looked to maximise the opportunities for natural daylighting, prioritising the key habitable dayrooms where relevant, with necessary artificial lighting provided by low energy systems.

To meet the residual demand for energy, not met via heat gains provided by the inhabitants, technologies and solar gains, highly efficient systems will be combined to achieve occupant comfort. The principle of this energy strategy going forwards will be to minimise demand and maximise efficiency whilst delivering comfort levels through user friendly smart systems. Careful analysis of the project's proposed function will provide the building specific characteristics for user comfort and requirements to ensure that the capacity and nature of energy systems are effectively tailored.

Increase Renewable Energy Supply

In order to deliver a 'zero net carbon' economy, the electrification of energy based on a massively decarbonised grid is critical to the Committee for Climate Change's recommendations. There is opportunity in every project to look at the supply of energy and this will be further developed in RIBA Stage 4.

Offset Any Remaining Carbon.

As part of a site-wide project, the kitchen garden element will play its part in offering mitigation in the form of new trees and extensive landscaping. The potential biodiversity gains within this area are substantial and have been considered in the overall landscaping of this area. In addition, providing space for a productive garden will allow for produce grown on site to be used in the catering offers across the site, which will help reduce the carbon footprint of the tea room/ visitor centre moving forwards.

ECOLOGY + BIODIVERSITY

Designations

The Gnoll Estate Country Park is designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) (NPTSINC036) by the Local Planning Authority through the Local Development Plan (2011- 2026). Gnoll Estate Country Park is a Grade II* designated parkland.

Ecology

To inform detailed design proposals, an extended Phase 1 habitat survey has been undertaken across areas that will be affected by the development. This supplements existing known information. The surveys assess the habitats currently present on site and identify any further surveys that are recommended. This has been supplemented by detailed analysis and mapping of key interventions including consideration of existing woodland structure, ground flora and shrub layers. This level of detail ensures that proposals are fully integrated within their existing natural setting whilst sensitively managing and enhancing habitats and features. Ecology has informed the proposed detailed designs, which include appropriate landscape mitigation and compensation, and are included with the planning application.

The Phase 1 habitat survey site was carried out in accordance with the standard methods set out in JNCC (2010). This encompassed the project site and the immediately surrounding habitats that could be safely accessed or viewed. Habitats were mapped and features of ecological value recorded. Any evidence of protected or non-native invasive plant species were also noted.

The surveys have been extended (in line with the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017)) to include an assessment of the suitability of habitats to support protected fauna and note the presence of signs of any protected fauna or those of conservation concern.

Wherever possible the detailed design proposals have been adapted to suit the ecological sensitivities identified through the site surveys with the aim of keeping ecological impacts to an absolute minimum and seeking to replace areas of improved scrub for those areas that are being necessarily removed as part of the development.

For each element of the project a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been produced to cover ecological mitigation measures in relation to the particular habitats, any protected species and the proposed works.

The CEMP report provides details of ecological mitigation measures to be implemented prior to and during construction to protect and mitigate effects on important ecological features within the site. This will include measures to prevent impacts from accidental spillages, dust, sediment inputs, movement of machinery, refuelling etc.

Arboriculture

In addition to the extended Phase 1 habitat surveys, an arboricultural impact assessment has been undertaken of the project sites to record information on all trees and hedges on, or within influencing distance of, the proposed development areas, in accordance with BS 5837.

The results of the site survey and associated desktop searches has been provided in the form of a Tree Constraints Plan showing tree locations, canopy extents, Root Protection Area (adjusted to reflect site conditions and constraints to root growth) and tree quality categorisation for the site. Full survey data and management recommendations in response to any existing or developing defects, hazards and opportunities are also noted.

The initial results of the survey and desktop searches are provided in the form of a Baseline Plan detailing tree locations, their canopy extents, Root Protection Area (adjusted to reflect site conditions and constraints to root growth) and quality categorisation. The plans also include a summary of all desktop search results and a description of the constraints to development presented by the existing trees. This information has been used to develop the designs regarding tree retention and removal, and assess the potential impacts on retained trees from the emerging detailed design schemes, with the aim of keeping tree impacts to an absolute minimum and identifying opportunities to enhance.

The report highlights that no trees of Category A or B are to be removed to facilitate the development in the kitchen garden or service yard, however as previously noted areas of planting that have been group Categorised 'C' will need to be cleared/ heavily reduced in the Kitchen Garden to facilitate the development. In addition, a number of Category C

and U trees will be removed in the service yard and other recommendations regarding pruning will be carried out.

It has been deemed that this is an acceptable loss in the context of the extensive new tree planting that is to be undertaken across the wider landscape and new fruit trees to be included within the kitchen garden itself. Refer to Arboricultural Report.

Following agreement on tree removal and retention, an Effects Plan showing the proposed layout and the existing trees has been produced. It identifies all trees that will be pruned and those that will be removed, including a detailed schedule of works. The plan makes an assessment, in accordance with BS 5837, of the effects on arboriculture from the proposed development.

On the basis of the final tree retention and pruning schedule, a Mitigation Plan for each project will be produced prior to works commencing, describing all relevant mitigation measures that are proposed as part of the overall application. This will show trees that will be retained within the proposed development, along with temporary protection measures (ie. tree protection fencing and/or ground protection) that are required during construction. It will also identify any areas in which controlled construction detailing is required and will specify any additional procedural measures that may be required in the course of construction. This will be followed.

Biodiversity Enhancements

The findings of the ecological and arboricultural surveys have informed the detailed design of the landscaping and building proposals.

Key objectives of the landscape proposals are to:

- Implement an historic planting scheme to enhance the historic interpretation of Gnoll Estate Country Park;
- Implement sustainable drainage systems to improve water quality and prevent water run-off - provided by a number of rain gardens;
- Provide mitigation for the impact of development (e.g. through the planting of new fruit trees);
- Achieve Biodiversity Net Gain; and
- Utilise locally sourced plants and materials where appropriate.

For further details please refer to Landscape Architect plans, Ecologist & Arboriculturalist Reports.





ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT AND MITIGATION

The following page summarises the assessment of the impact of the proposals on the existing heritage values of the Kitchen Garden and Service Yard at The Gnoll Estate Country Park. It is measured against the following four values in accordance with Cadw's Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales:

Evidential Value – Value deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical Value - Value deriving from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.

Aesthetic Value – Value deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal Value – Value deriving from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
The proposals for the Kitchen Garden and Service Yard include:	General Overview – Gnoll Estate Country Park is a grade II* designated, formally designed park encompassing wider informal areas. Its main phases of construction include the 1720's, 1740's, 1776-1790, 1811-1861 and 1899. Gnoll house, which was once at the heart of the landscape was an example of a 'country estate' built by the nouveau-riche with the great wealth that had been acquired on the back of industrialisation. Reservoirs were added to the estate in 1702 to provide water for the industrial process being undertaken by the Mackworth Family. The first iteration of a 'Pump-house' seems to appear at this time although historic maps show that the existing pump house likely dates back to the early 20th century. The surrounding area has largely been left undeveloped and in recent years has been used as a service yard for the parkland. The kitchen garden was introduced to provide food for the main house. This would have featured several structures to aid in the growing of produce. Unfortunately the structures have largely been lost and the formal layout is now illegible.	Evidential Value – Although the formal layout and many of the structures of the kitchen garden have been lost, the original walls still exist in part. There are also several structures within the grounds, including three potting sheds. The area holds some evidential value in its form, however, it is more significant in what it demonstrates in regard to the development and operation of the estate. The pump house holds evidential value as a historic building relating to the running of the estate and the ponds. That being said, the surrounding service yard has little to no evidential value.	Evidential Value – The introduction of accommodation to the Kitchen could result in the loss of evidential value if undertaken in an insensitive manner. However, efforts to reinstate the kitchen garden formal layout will help to counteract this and have a positive impact on the evidential value of the site. Despite the demolition of the potting sheds, the proposed lodges will largely occupy the same footprint, and the walls will be retained. The pump house does not form part of these proposals and therefore there is no impact to the building itself. The service yard is intended to be used as a car park for the new accommodation within the kitchen gardens. This is deemed reasonable due to the negligible significance of the yard.	Historical research into the Gnoll Estate Country Park to date has been required to justify the proposals. Accurate and ongoing recording of the park and its historic structures has also been required. Documenting the structures should continue throughout the construction process as necessary. This should be undertaken through drawn, photographic and written recording. Careful consideration of proposed design and materials has also been necessary to ensure they are sympathetic to the surrounding Grade II* listed parkland in terms of appearance and properties.	Evidential Value – As the kitchen garden and service yard in their current condition have existing evidential value due to the still-legible layout of historic walls and access points to and around the gardens. This will be enhanced through repairs to existing evidential elements. The gardens also hold evidential value through their association with Gnoll House - which is further evidence of the use and development of the Gnoll Estate Country Park. The reinstatement of the formal kitchen garden grounds will re-introduce visitors to this area of the park and its connection to the wider estate thus enhancing the evidential value.	Careful consideration of proposed design and materials to ensure they are sympathetic to the surrounding Grade II* listed parkland in terms of appearance and properties.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
	Whilst Gnoll House has since been demolished, the parkland is now under the ownership of Neath Port Talbot Council and provides an important recreational space for the community. Likewise it forms an integral part of the historic and present day identity of the local population.	Historical Value – Gnoll Estate Country Park and its historic assets are important because they act as a historical touchstone. They link the past to the present and enable people to connect across time and generations. At the height of its influence, Gnoll House and its surrounding landscape were central to the industrial development of Neath, embodying the great wealth that came with it. The kitchen gardens played an important role in this as the 'bread-basket' for the estate, with strong historical association to the now-demolished Gnoll House. This area is therefore historically significant in demonstrating the development and operation of the estate, and in helping to further reinterpret the parkland as an outworking of the industrial endeavours and status of the Mackworth family.	Historical Value – The proposals will likely have a positive affect on the historic value. Despite the change of use, the area is currently unused by visitors and therefore the history of the kitchen garden and day-to-day operation of the estate is largely unrecognised. Introducing visitor accommodation, reintroduces the public to a previously neglected area of the park. In addition, the reinstatement of the formal kitchen garden allows for better interpretation, thereby improving the historical value and integrity, whilst historic walls will also be repaired.		Historical Value – The regeneration of visitor facilities at Gnoll Estate Country Park allows visitors to be reengaged with the history of the park and wider area of Neath. The proposals suitably combine new accommodation integrated into the restored kitchen garden, creating a pleasant and meaningful environment that reconnects visitors with the historic estate.	
		Aesthetic Value – Gnoll Estate Country Park has huge aesthetic value as a significant 18th century landscaped estate which retains many of its early features. However, in it's current condition, the Kitchen Garden and service yard have very little aesthetic value. At the height of its use, the Kitchen Garden would have held significant aesthetic value in its formal layout and planting which has since been lost. The service yard currently has a negative aesthetic value due to its poorly maintained structures and generally run-down appearance.	Aesthetic Value – The proposals seek to reinstate the formal Kitchen Garden as well as re-landscaping the area around the new accommodation. This will be a significant improvement on the existing aesthetic value although not entirely following the original use. The re-use of the service yard as a car park with associated landscaping will significantly improve the aesthetic value of the area. In both areas the works will improve the presentation of the parkland generally.		Aesthetic Value – The existing aesthetic value of the Kitchen Garden and Service Yard could be considered negative with potential for improvement. The proposed design is significantly more sympathetic to the wider parkland will have a positive affect on the aesthetic value.	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
		Communal Value – Gnoll Estate Country Park holds significant communal value derived in part from its status as a source of identity for Neath - both as a municipal park and for its historical connections to the area and development of industry. The park is a significant place for leisure and is a focus of the immediate community. The community of Neath have great affection for the parkland and families have strong connections going back generations. In the past, the Kitchen Garden would have been central to development of the estate, providing produce for Gnoll House and its inhabitants. It is also crucial to understanding how the estate was operated on a day-to-day basis.	Communal Value – The Kitchen Garden and service yard do not currently offer any benefit for the visitors to the park or wider community. Opening up this area of the park allows for the enjoyment and interpretation of the Kitchen gardens, a once integral part of the estate. The addition of accommodation within Gnoll Estate Country Park also brings opportunities for people to experience the park in a new way and encourages tourism which has a wider benefit to the surrounding area of Neath. The regeneration of facilities in this way ensures its enjoyment by future generations. The proposal to use the pump house service yard as a car park for the new kitchen garden accommodation could be considered an improvement on the communal value of the space due to its contribution to the operation of the proposals.		Communal Value – Gnoll Estate Country Park forms a source of identity for the people of Neath. The neglect of facilities reflects on wider society and contrastingly their renewal is likely to have a positive effect on the wider area. Likewise, the proposals seek to provide a functional space for people to interact with and rediscover a part of the historic estate. This will not only improve the communal value of the Kitchen Garden and Service Yard but will also have a positive influence on the rest of the park and more importantly, the wider area of Neath. The pump house service yard currently has no communal value and thus its development is deemed appropriate.	

APPENDICES

Registered Historic Park & Garden



Details

Reference Number	Name	Grade	Date of Designation	Status
PGW(Gm)50(NEP)	The Gnoll	II*	01/02/2022	Designated

Location

Unitary Authority	Community	Easting	Northing
Neath Port Talbot	Tonna	276824	197582

Broad Class	Site Type	Main phases of construction
Gardens, Parks and Urban Spaces	Formal and informal park; Victorian pleasure grounds; walled kitchen garden	1720s; 1740s; 1776-90; 1811-61; 1899

Description

Summary Description and Reason for Designation

The Gnoll was located on a prominent, steep-sided hill or knoll, on the east side of Neath.

It is registered for the survival of its largely eighteenth-century landscape park, which is of great historic interest, in its original rural setting above Neath. It lies on the flank of the Vale of Neath, long famed for its picturesque beauty. The landscape of The Gnoll is exceptional for its combination of industrial and ornamental functions and for its strong visual relationship with the surrounding countryside. The eighteenth-

century landscaping is of several phases, including an exceptionally interesting early transitional layout by Thomas Greening, in the style of Stephen Switzer, with formal and informal elements, including a (restored) formal cascade. The following phases include an outstanding informal cascade of the 1740s and the later eighteenth-century follies of a rock-hewn grotto and the Ivy Tower, which forms a prominent landmark in the Neath valley. Although the park's historic character has been somewhat diluted through the loss of the house and planting, most of its structural elements remain intact or have been restored or rebuilt. Most of the major developments in the park and grounds took place during the eighteenth century under the ownership of the Mackworth family.

The park lies on elevated, rolling ground on the south flank of the Vale of Neath. It is linear, orientated north-east by south-west. Its eastern, upper side is largely wooded, its western side more open. On the east the ground rises towards the high ground of Cefn Morfydd, while to the south and west it drops below the park to the town of Neath. The house is sited on a prominent hill at the south-western end of the park. There are three ponds and a late nineteenth-century reservoir, to supply water for coal mining and copper smelting, and for ornament.

South of the house site, at the south end of the park, is the wooded Preswylfa valley, largely deciduous, with the Great Pond half way along it. To the north is an open area of parkland, the largest pond, the Fishpond, and a smaller pond with two small islands. Fishpond Wood is mature woodland containing the (restored) formal cascade to the east and remnants of a more extensive lime avenue. This is aligned on a long formal axis from the north end of the hill on which the house stood, across the ha-ha and up the cascade to Brynau Wood and Cefn Morfydd, beyond the park.

The northern part of the park comprises open ground on the western side, now partly a golf course, and Mosshouse Wood, mixed woodland which extends from Fishpond Wood on the south to high ground on the north. It contains the reservoir and a long, informal Grade II Listed cascade (LB 22870). There are also several eighteenth-century follies including the rebuilt 'gazebo' and a Grade II Listed Grotto (LB 22860). The final feature of the landscape park is Grade II Listed Ivy Tower (LB 11768), a prominent eighteenth-century eye-catcher folly tower situated on a hilltop to the north of Mosshouse Wood, overlooking the park and the Vale of Neath.

There have been several entrances at The Gnoll, only two of which remain in use. An entrance with imposing castellated stone archway and a simple iron gate now lies on Gnoll Avenue. Inside the entrance the former drive, now a public road, is lined with pines, leading to the Grade II Listed War Memorial Gate of Honour entrance (LB 11784). Inside, a tarmac drive runs eastwards up the Preswylfa valley. A former entrance at the end of Gnoll Avenue is marked by Grade II Listed gate & lodges (LB 11782).

The garden and pleasure grounds lie on the hill on which the house once stood. The garden consists of the terrace to the west of the house site, which looks out over the town and beyond. It is a rectangular grassy platform bounded with a low stone parapet wall on the west and a revetment wall on the east, accessed from the house by a flight of steps. Below is an area of deciduous woodland with ornamental understorey. At the north end is a curving recessed stone seat and a yew on a small mound. To the south of the house is the oval forecourt area, with grass in the centre. Two paths now lead into it.

The grounds lie mainly to the east of the house site but also on the slopes of the hill to the west and south.

The crown of the hill is occupied by wooded grounds laid out informally, with paths and a few open areas. The south side is bounded by a stone revetment walling. Below on the south-east is a walled enclosure, formerly the herbaceous garden but now rough grass. On the hill summit is the bowling green, a roughly circular level lawn surrounded by rhododendrons and mixed trees. To the north is a gentle slope down to a long, level, grass terrace running east-west from the north end of the house to a ha-ha on the east. North of the terrace is an area of mixed ornamental woodland and shrubs, with some bamboo clumps.

The former kitchen gardens lie to the east of the pleasure grounds, on ground sloping gently to the south, and have origins in the mid-eighteenth century. To their west is Groll Cottage, or Little Groll House, and garden. The kitchen gardens forms three compartments. The northernmost is roughly oval in shape, partially walled and under rough grass. The others occupy a roughly rectangular area adjoining on the south, bounded by walls 2.5m-4.5m high with a wide entrance at the east end. The east compartment is on two levels; on the upper one is a modern glasshouse; on the lower one are two long, parallel ranges of single-storey stone and brick bothies. To their south are three modern glasshouses set at right-angles to the bothies. The third compartment, to the west, is roughly square, the south-east corner rounded and with an entrance towards the west end of the south side. Tipping has raised the ground level in this compartment.

Setting - The Groll stood on a prominent, steep-sided hill or knoll, hence its name, on the east side of the town, the park lying on the flank of the Vale of Neath, well known for its picturesque beauty. Urban expansion means that the town now abuts the southern and western margins of the park.

Significant views - From the main west front of the house there were magnificent views out over the town and Vale of Neath, and from the pleasure grounds views east towards the higher ground of Cefn Morfudd. The view eastwards from the end of the pleasure ground terrace is across the sloping park to the Fishpond and up the cascade on the wooded slope beyond. The Ivy Tower folly, at the north end of the park, afforded panoramic views over the park and the Vale of Neath.

Sources:
Cadw Historic Assets Database (ref: PGW(Gm)50(NEP)).



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